

Seattle 2013 Climate Action Plan

Progress Report 2013-2025

Executive Summary



Seattle
Office of Sustainability
& Environment

One Seattle
CLIMATE
ACTION
PLAN

Background

Seattle's 2013 Climate Action Plan (2013 Plan) created a coordinated strategy to prepare for climate change and become carbon neutral by 2050. The 2013 Plan focused on City of Seattle (the City) actions that reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and supported other community goals, including:

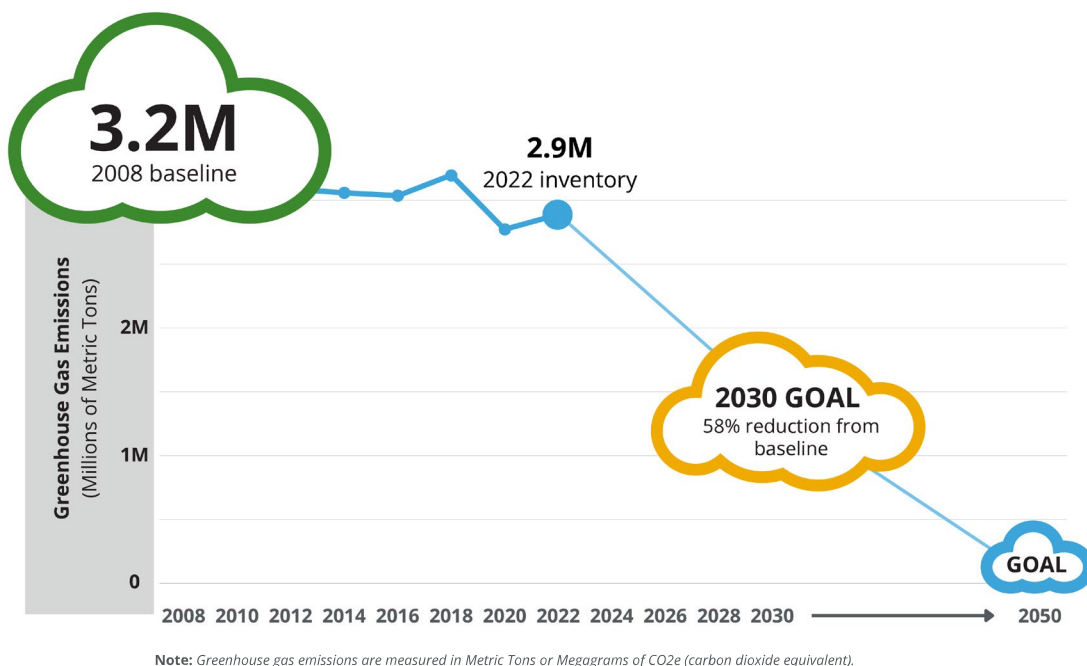
- Building vibrant neighborhoods
- Fostering economic prosperity
- Prioritizing racial and social equity

The plan organized actions into four areas where City action would have the greatest impact, including: Transportation and Land Use, Building Energy, Waste, and Preparing for Climate Change. The 2013 Plan also included indicators intended to track progress towards climate goal outcomes to be achieved by 2030, including:

- Cut passenger vehicle emissions by 82%
- Reduce building energy emissions by 39%
- Lower overall city emissions by 64%

Overall, the 2013 Plan had 148 climate actions: 51 Transportation and Land Use actions, 41 Building Energy actions, 29 Waste actions, and 27 Preparing for Climate Change actions.

Seattle's Emissions Reduction Goals



Data in this visual was developed in 2022 for OSE's 2022 Community Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory.

Purpose of the Report

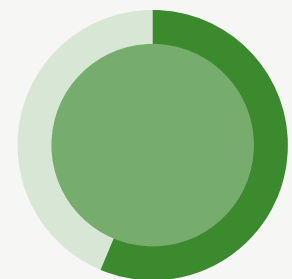
This report provides a progress update toward achieving the 2013 Plan's goals, actions, and metrics. This report also provides a foundation to consider new ideas, refine existing actions, and remove outdated or accomplished efforts as part of the One Seattle Climate Action Plan update in 2026. This report further identifies notable climate actions Seattle has accomplished both within and outside of the 2013 Plan and through staff innovation, partnerships, and City leadership on initiatives beyond the plan.



Key Areas of Progress

Over the last 12 years, Seattle has continued to be one of the most dynamic and inclusive cities in the United States. Since 2012, the city's population has grown by 30%, driven in large part by strong job growth and in-migration. Between 2010 and 2020, Seattle gained nearly 176,000 net new jobs.

Even with a growing population and the increased building stock, transportation, and energy demands that population growth brings, Seattle has completed or made significant progress on 88 of 148 actions in the 2013 Plan. However, not all actions were equal in scope or impact. Some were smaller, some were foundational, while others carried much greater weight for reducing emissions. Completion rates alone do not fully reflect progress towards the City's climate goals.



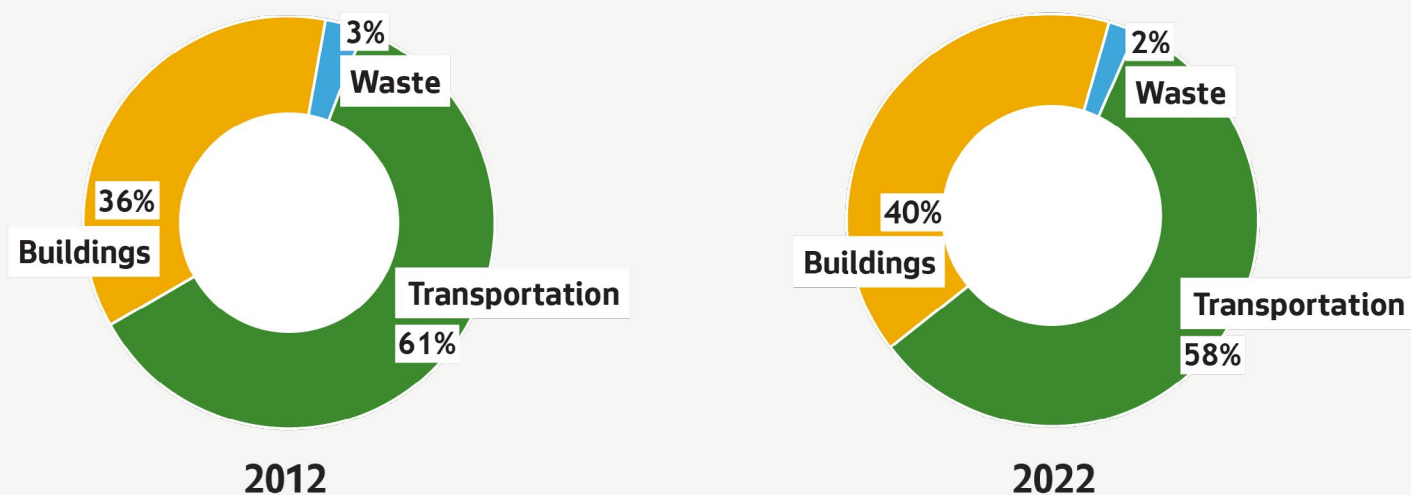
88 of 148 Actions
Significant Progress or Completion

The City was most successful in increasing opportunities for low GHG emission transportation trips, developing codes and policies that reduce building and transportation emissions, decreasing food and building material waste, collecting important climate-related data, and expanding programs for building energy efficiency, weatherization, and electrification.

This progress report is mainly focused on how successful the City has been at implementing 2013 Plan actions. It also captures notable climate actions undertaken outside of the 2013 Plan in response to shifting contexts and strategic opportunities. Taken together, Seattle's climate actions showcase meaningful progress but have not put us on a trajectory to hit our 2030 climate targets. Bolder and more impactful action is needed.

A majority of the successful actions were either transportation and land use actions or building energy actions that address the two sectors most responsible for Seattle's core GHG emissions¹. In 2012, transportation was responsible for 61% of Seattle's core emissions, buildings for 36%, and waste for 3%. As of 2022, transportation is responsible for 58% of Seattle's core emissions, buildings for 40%, and waste for 2%. The increase in building's proportion reflects the overall growth of the city and construction booms. Also, most indicators measuring emissions in the key sectors had good, consistent data collected.

Emissions by Sector



- 1 Core emissions as defined in [Seattle's GHG Emissions Inventory](#) include the transportation, buildings, and waste sectors as well as GHG offsets. Core emissions sources are those the City can most directly and significantly impact.

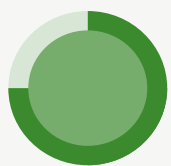


Photo: Office of Sustainability and Environment.

Notable Successes

Transportation & Land Use

Key Stats



Significant progress
or completion on
38 of 51 actions



Overall transportation emissions
reduction of 14% from 2008 to
2022, or 32% per capita

Notable Success from the 2013 Plan

High-capacity transit expansion: Since 2013, the City, in partnership with King County Metro and Sound Transit, supported the development of five Rapid Ride bus routes (6 by 2027) and five Link light rail stations (7 by 2026).

60,610 new housing units in Urban Centers and Villages: Coordinated land use and transportation planning has increased opportunities for hundreds of thousands of households to have low GHG emission trips via transit, walking, or biking.

Additional Successes

Climate Change Response Framework: A 2023 Seattle plan that set out a framework of how to achieve significant transportation changes in how people travel by 2030.

First all-electric bus in Amtrak's national network: In 2023, a partnership between the City, WSDOT, MTRWestern, and Amtrak launched the first all-electric bus in Amtrak's national network, connecting Seattle and Bellingham and eliminating 109 metric tons of CO2 emissions annually.

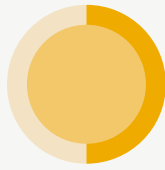
Washington's first electric van share program: The launch of Washington state's first-ever electric ADA-accessible van share was made possible by a partnership between the non-profit consumer cooperative ZEV co-op, justice-focused community bookstore Estelita's Library, and the City. A Level 2 EV charging station in the Central District supports the new van share program, providing charging access in this historically underrepresented neighborhood.

Battery electric medium- and heavy-duty charging strategy: The City worked with the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT) to adapt a national study on medium and heavy electric vehicle (MHD) implementation to Seattle.

Transportation electrification: Built 85 City-owned and -operated public charging stations at 41 locations and directly supported the deployment of 905 electric vehicle chargers.

Building Energy

Key Stats



Significant progress
or completion on
21 of 41 actions



Overall building sector emissions
reduction of 6% from 2008 to
2022, or 26% per capita

Notable Success from the 2013 Plan

Improvements to Seattle energy code: Over three code update cycles, from 2015 to 2021, the City progressively improved the City's energy code to ensure new and significantly renovated buildings meet a high energy efficiency standard.

Reducing emissions in existing buildings: Since 2017, the City has helped more than 2,000 households convert from expensive heating oil to clean, energy-efficient heat pumps and the City is on-track to eliminate heating oil in Seattle by 2030. The City also passed a Building Emissions Performance Standard law in 2024 that will reduce building sector emissions 27% by 2050.

Additional Successes

City Light Building Electrification Strategy: Sets up a strategy to support buildings that want to or are mandated to electrify in Seattle.

Municipal Buildings Decarbonization Plan: Charts the path toward eliminating fossil fuels from municipal buildings. To date, 23 of 176 City buildings using fossil fuel systems and equipment have already been fully decarbonized.

Transportation Electrification Infrastructure Master Plan: Prepares for growing EV adoption by streamlining the process of installing EV charging infrastructure.

Waste

Key Stats



Significant progress or completion on 12 of 29 actions



Overall waste sector emissions reduction of 31% from 2008 to 2022, or 45% per capita

Notable Success from the 2013 Plan

Compost Legislation: In 2015, the City banned food and compostable paper from landfill disposal, a landmark policy that put Seattle ahead of most U.S. cities in encouraging composting.

Extended Producer Responsibility for waste: Sustained advocacy and collaboration from the City led to the state's passage of the Recycling Reform Act in 2025, which makes producers of packaging and paper products responsible for reducing waste and increasing recycling and reuse.

Additional Successes

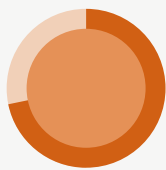
Solid Waste Plan update: Reflects on progress made from 2011 to 2022 and guides Seattle's ongoing and future direction for solid waste management.

Residential waste collection containers. Photo: Seattle Public Utilities.



Preparing for Climate Change

Key Stats



Significant progress or completion on 17 of 24 actions



Advanced climate data collection on heat, flooding, and infrastructure to strengthen preparedness for climate change impacts

Notable Success from the 2013 Plan

Duwamish Valley flood protection: The City invested tens of millions of dollars of capital investments in the lower Duwamish Valley to help prevent flooding and to plan for sea level rise.

Extensive climate data collection: Seattle has made significant progress in evaluating, monitoring, and planning for heat, precipitation, wildfire, and flooding impacts on electric resources, drainage systems, water supply systems, and other key infrastructure, helping the city better prepare for climate change impacts.

Water management: Significant investments in protecting long-term water supply and building infrastructure to help protect against the impacts of climate-related flooding and sea level rise.

Food Systems: Since 2013, Seattle has expanded community gardens, advanced food justice, and strengthened worker protections. Programs like Fresh Bucks and the Food Equity Fund have boosted local health, equity, and sustainability in the food system.

Urban Forestry: Seattle has made strong progress toward its 30% tree canopy goal, growing coverage from 23% in 2007 to 28.1% in 2021. This success is driven by the Green Seattle Partnership's expansion of restoration efforts, planting of hundreds of thousands of native trees, and deepened community engagement.

Additional Successes

Equity & Environment Agenda: The first city-led effort in the nation to establish a racially equitable framework for Seattle's environmental work. It created a formal Environmental Justice Committee in 2017, to ensure community leadership and launched the Environmental Justice Fund in 2018, awarding over \$2.6 million to 43 community-led climate projects in its first five years.

One Seattle Climate Portal: An interactive web tool that measures climate indicators and metrics, and brings visibility at the neighborhood-scale.

Challenges

Although Seattle has completed or made significant progress on 88 of 148 actions in the 2013 Plan and put into practice a number of additional climate actions not covered in the 2013 Plan, the city is not on track to meet its climate goals. As of 2022, vehicle emissions have only decreased 14.4% and building emissions 6.1% since the 2008 baseline. Citywide emissions have only decreased 12% over the same timeframe, even though emissions per resident were reduced by around 30%. Seattle is not on track to reach its target of a 58% reduction by 2030.

Actions that were challenging often had similar barriers for implementation. These included: lack of jurisdictional control, high cost or challenging financing, improved compliance needed, differing priorities, and limited market demand.

Though Seattle regularly collects and reports emissions data for the transportation, buildings, and waste sectors, several other indicators identified in the 2013 Plan either had inconsistently measured data or data that wasn't measured at the right scale or geography. These gaps limited the City's ability to assess progress and highlight the need for more consistent, comprehensive, and appropriately-scaled data collection.

Families travel by bike and on foot through a Seattle neighborhood greenway. Photo: Seattle Department of Transportation.





Looking Forward

Not every city experienced Seattle's rate of population growth and the increased building stock, transportation, and energy demands that population growth brings. As the City begins the One Seattle Climate Action Plan update, ensuring a scale of implementation large enough to reach emission reduction goals and increase community resilience will be challenging. Yet these challenges also present opportunities.

A growing population required the City to develop strategies that both accommodated growth and managed rising energy demands, while still making progress toward the 2013 Plan's emission reduction goals. These rising energy demands also pose challenges for the electric grid, which must be modernized and scaled to meet increasing demand and support electrification of transportation and buildings. Population growth and the resulting increases in buildings, transportation, and energy use partly explain why emissions remained higher than they would have been without those changes. At the same time, the implementation of 2013 Plan actions, and the scale at which they were carried out, played a significant role in driving emissions reductions and strengthening community resiliency.

Seattle needs more and faster climate action, including stronger strategies to prepare for climate change, growing a future climate economy, and advancing public health, and equity in partnership with community. The lessons from this report will provide a foundation to consider new ideas, improve existing actions, and create an effective system for reporting measurable progress as part of the One Seattle Climate Action Plan update.