



King County

2025 STRATEGIC CLIMATE ACTION PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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With a population of over 2 million people, King County is Washington’s largest county, critical to shaping a healthy, sustainable future for the entire region. The County has a long-standing commitment to bold climate leadership, setting policies and ambitious targets to cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and build climate resilient communities. Despite decades of action, GHG emissions in King County are 4 percent higher than in 2007, though 8 percent lower than the 2019 peak. This signals some progress, but not enough.

Emissions reduction is not only a policy goal, but a moral and practical imperative. People across the region are experiencing more frequent record-breaking climate events like heat waves and wildfires. These events pose serious and growing risks to infrastructure, public health, and ecosystems, especially in frontline communities. Emissions reductions are essential to slowing climate change and avoiding its most severe health, economic, and environmental consequences.

Addressing climate change requires an increase in the scale and speed of action while deepening coordination across all levels of government. King County plays a critical leadership role ensuring that communities across the region benefit from stronger, more unified climate policies and investments. The Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP) outlines how the County can reduce GHG emissions, center frontline communities, and prepare for climate change impacts.

KING COUNTY’S PLAN: BOLD ACTION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The SCAP serves as King County’s five-year roadmap to address climate change, with updates to three sections: Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Sustainable and Resilient Frontline Communities, and Preparing for Climate Change. Since its inception in 2012, King County’s SCAP has led to significant progress in clean energy adoption, sustainable transportation, ecosystem restoration, and community-led solutions.

The 2025 SCAP includes five sections, nine flagships, 25 focus areas, 178 actions, and 65 performance measures for building a more sustainable, equitable and resilient future for all.

Flagship Outcomes

The 2025 SCAP flagships represent King County’s most visible and community-driven climate priorities. They connect actions across SCAP’s three core sections—to broader, outcome-driven goals that improve the lives of King County residents. This approach ensures climate action is embedded in transportation, housing, food systems, infrastructure, and economic development, benefiting all residents, especially those most affected by climate change.

The following flagship outcomes represent climate solutions that ensure the work by King County is community-driven, equitable, and built to last:

- 1. Put Frontline Communities First:** Investing in leadership, expanding access to resources, and ensuring climate policies are designed with and for frontline communities.
- 2. Safe, Healthy, and Climate-Ready Buildings:** Strengthening housing and workplaces to withstand extreme heat, wildfire smoke, and flooding while ensuring affordability and preventing displacement.
- 3. Connected and Accessible Transportation:** Expanding sustainable mobility options like transit, biking, and walking to reduce car dependency and improve access to jobs, schools, and services.
- 4. Economic Mobility and Career Opportunities:** Ensuring the clean energy transition creates economic opportunities, particularly for historically excluded workers and communities.
- 5. Fresh, Local Food for Everyone:** Strengthening food security and sustainable agriculture by supporting farmers, reducing food waste, and increasing access to fresh, healthy food.
- 6. Design Out Waste:** Reducing consumption, preventing waste, and reusing valuable materials.
- 7. Clean Air, Water, and Healthy Ecosystems:** Protecting and restoring forests, waterways, and green spaces to improve public health, biodiversity, and climate resilience.
- 8. Reliable and Future-Ready Infrastructure:** Modernizing roads, utilities, and public services to withstand climate extremes while ensuring equitable access to essential infrastructure.
- 9. Collective Leadership and Community-Led Solutions:** Embedding equity in climate governance by ensuring frontline communities, Tribes, and local organizations help shape and lead climate solutions.

Section Update: Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions Section

The 2025 SCAP charts a path toward continued greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction. The largest sources of emissions are from buildings and transportation, followed by smaller contributions: refrigerant gases, land use, solid waste and wastewater. Using 2007 emission levels as a baseline, King County seeks to eliminate countywide sources of GHG emissions over the next 25 years. The SCAP calls for a 50 percent reduction by 2030, 75 percent by 2040, and 95 to 100 percent (or net-zero) by 2050.

The 2025 SCAP outlines plans to work with partners and communities over the next five years to do the following:

- **Lead by example**, advocating for stronger GHG emissions policies, demonstrating local leadership, and strengthening accountability within County operations.
- **Accelerate clean energy and zero-emissions solutions** through high-performance green buildings, energy efficiency programs, and the transition to zero-emissions infrastructure and fleets.
- **Expand access to reliable transportation** by improving public transit, supporting active mobility, and reducing emissions from vehicle emissions.
- **Reduce waste through a circular economy** that focuses on reuse, recovery, and responsible consumption.
- **Take care of natural lands** and prepare infrastructure for the future by supporting farming and forestry practices that capture carbon and building public infrastructure that can handle climate impacts and serve all communities equally.

Outlook

The 2025 SCAP builds on King County's legacy of climate action. However, to achieve significant carbon reductions, climate action must be integrated across the federal, state, and local levels. Implementing existing federal and state emissions reductions measures and those proposed in the 2025 SCAP are only expected to yield a 33 percent emission reduction by 2030. This falls short of the 50 percent target, highlighting the need for additional partnership across all levels of government. As a regional government, King County can directly implement climate actions through its services and plays a key role in convening local partners to advocate for strong federal and state actions.

Section Update: Sustainable and Resilient Frontline Communities Section

Climate change does not affect all communities equally. Frontline communities—Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant and refugee populations, residents who are low-income, individuals with pre-existing health conditions, unsheltered populations, and outdoor workers—experience the earliest, most severe, and longest-lasting climate impacts. These communities are more likely to live in flood-prone areas, neighborhoods with less tree cover, or near major roadways with high pollution levels, putting them at greater risk of extreme heat, poor air quality, and displacement due to climate disasters.

These climate-driven challenges worsen existing health, economic and social disparities, making it critical to prioritize investments in climate resilience, infrastructure improvements, and community-driven solutions that protect those most at risk.

Community-Driven Leadership and Policymaking

The 2025 SCAP reflects community priorities for policymaking and leadership in climate action. Key focus areas include:

- **Housing security and anti-displacement efforts** that ensure investments in climate resilience do not displace residents by expanding affordable housing, protecting renters, and ensuring equitable access to energy-efficient home upgrades.
- **Expanded access to transit** and affordable, low-carbon mobility options for all communities.
- **Energy justice and utilities affordability** measures reduce energy burdens for households who are low-income, transitioning away from fossil fuels, and expanding clean energy solutions.
- **Green workforce development** efforts help create jobs, training, and economic opportunities, especially in frontline communities and with workers who have been historically excluded.
- **Food security and sustainable agriculture** strengthens food systems by supporting local farmers, reducing food waste, and increasing access to fresh, healthy food for frontline communities.

Outlook

King County is committed to advancing climate solutions that are effective and equitable. The 2025 SCAP reflects this commitment by prioritizing community-led strategies, investing in climate resilience, and ensuring that frontline communities are at the forefront of decision-making. This is the foundation for a future where all residents have access to clean air, safe housing, reliable transportation, and economic opportunities to climate change. The path forward requires continued collaboration, bold investments, and policies that center the voices of those most affected. A resilient King County is one where frontline communities are not just protected from climate change, but are leading the way toward a healthier, more just future for all.

Section Update: Climate Preparedness

The 2025 SCAP sets new targets for addressing climate preparedness. Climate change is already impacting King County, and the pace of it is increasing. The region is experiencing more frequent and severe extreme weather events, posing serious risks to the community, infrastructure, and natural ecosystems. As climate threats like extreme heat events, flooding, wildfires and sea level rise increase, King County is working on strategies to protect residents, businesses, infrastructure, and natural resources to ensure that communities are prepared for the challenges ahead.

To reduce risks and enhance climate resilience, the 2025 SCAP Climate Preparedness section includes the following strategic priorities over the next five years:

- **Help people and communities stay safe and healthy in the face of climate change** by reducing risks from flooding, sea level rise, extreme heat and wildfire; expanding community access to cooling spaces and flood protection tools; supporting locally led heat and wildfire resilience strategies; improving protections for rural infrastructure; and enhancing public health tracking to better respond to climate-related health risks.
- **Build resilient infrastructure** by incorporating climate risks, like flooding and extreme weather, into how the County designs, builds and upgrades capital projects. This includes flood protection, stormwater systems, wastewater facilities, and Metro transit infrastructure. New standards and planning tools will help ensure public investments are built to last in a changing climate.
- **Implement multi-benefit solutions**, including expansion of green infrastructure like stormwater parks, rain gardens, and street trees, to manage flooding, improve water quality, and create healthier communities. A key focus will be growing the urban tree canopy across jurisdictions to reduce heat and support

livability, while also accelerating the use of recycled water and nature-based solutions for habitat restoration and agricultural resilience.

- **Increase ecosystem resilience** through the restoration and management of forests, shorelines, and habitat with climate change in mind. Efforts include accelerating forest restoration on public lands, expanding the supply of climate-adapted seedlings, planting more trees, and supporting private landowners in applying best practices. The County will also improve lake conditions for fish recovery and map wildlife habitat corridors to protect vulnerable species into the future.
- **Strengthen collaboration, knowledge, and systems for long-term resilience**, including work with local, regional, and tribal partners to prepare for climate impacts like sea level rise, drought, flooding, and extreme heat. This includes developing shared strategies for high-risk areas such as the Duwamish Valley and supporting climate-informed planning across shoreline and capital projects.

Outlook

King County is committed to building a future where communities, infrastructure, and natural resources are resilient to climate change. The 2025 SCAP strengthens these efforts by expanding investments in climate preparedness, green infrastructure, and community-led resilience programs. Planning for climate impacts is not only about reducing risks, but also about ensuring long-term safety, stability, and well-being of King County's residents and economy. Investing in climate resilience now will reduce future costs and create a healthier, more livable region for everyone. Through stronger policies, partnerships, and on-the-ground solutions, the County will continue leading efforts to protect people and places from growing threats of climate change.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

King County will use data to drive action and stay accountable. The SCAP includes updated performance measures that track progress toward GHG reduction, equity, and climate preparedness goals. These metrics help identify what's working, where adjustments need to be made, and how to ensure that climate strategies deliver real results for communities across the region.

LEARN MORE

King County's approach to climate action prioritizes continuous improvement of plans, programs, and activities. This requires ongoing community engagement and responsiveness to evolving climate science and emissions sources, as well as a Biennial Report to inform each five-year update of the SCAP.

For more information about King County climate efforts, please go to www.kingcounty.gov/climate.

To stay up to date on King County climate action, please sign up for the newsletter at: bit.ly/kcclimateneews

