

# PUTTING EQUITY INTO ACTION



**MULTNOMAH COUNTY  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

# CLIMATE ACTION PLAN 2009



City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability  
Sam Adams, Mayor | Susan Anderson, Director



MULTNOMAH COUNTY Sustainability Program  
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### CONSUMPTION AND SOLID WASTE

2030 OBJECTIVES

10. Reduce total solid waste generated by 25 percent.
11. Recover 90 percent of all waste generated.
12. Reduce the greenhouse gas impacts of the waste collection system by 40 percent.

## 4

### URBAN FORESTRY AND NATURAL SYSTEMS

2030 OBJECTIVES

13. Expand the urban forest canopy to cover one-third of Portland, and at least 50 percent of total stream and river length in the city meet urban water temperature goals as an indicator of watershed health.

## 5

### FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

2030 OBJECTIVES

14. Reduce consumption of carbon-intensive foods.
15. Significantly increase the consumption of local food.

## 6

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

2030 OBJECTIVES

16. Motivate all Multnomah County residents and businesses to change their behavior in ways that reduce carbon emissions.

## 7

### CLIMATE CHANGE PREPARATION

2030 OBJECTIVES

17. Adapt successfully to a changing climate.

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### LOCAL GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

2030 OBJECTIVES

18. Reduce carbon emissions from City and County operations 50 percent from 1990 levels.

## CLIMATE CHANGE PREPARATION

Climate change impacts are already evident, both globally and in Oregon. More impacts are inevitable. In Oregon, rainstorms and snowstorms could increase in severity, but less snow would build up in the mountains; coast towns could experience more flooding, causing increased damage to roads, buildings, bridges, and water and sewer systems; crops and livestock could face warmer temperatures, less water for drinking and irrigation, and drier soils; and heat waves could increase, causing a rise in heat-related illnesses and deaths.

Preparing for climate change must be understood broadly and as an integral component of Portland and Multnomah County's Climate Action Plan. Buildings, for example, must be designed to accommodate a changing climate — comfortable in higher temperatures, for example, and resilient to stronger storms and other physical impacts of climate change while also highly energy efficient. The public utility field must simultaneously help prevent climate change — for example, by encouraging walking—and prepare for it, by anticipating changing disease patterns and more intense heat waves, among many other things. Natural systems have an equally integral role. Protecting wetlands, for example, both sequesters carbon emissions and prepares Portland to handle the projected increase in severe rainstorms.

The City and County must accelerate efforts to protect and improve watershed health, strengthen linkages between public health and climate change, and comprehensively evaluate the response to

CITY OF PORTLAND AND MULTNOMAH COUNTY

the community's vulnerabilities to climate change. These considerations add to the complexity of preparing for the diverse challenges and opportunities in the decades ahead—population growth, shifting demographics and changes in the regional and global economy. The breadth of these challenges underscores the need to plan for adaptable and resilient systems that help the City and County achieve their long-range goals of environmental and community health, economic development, equity, affordability and neighborhood livability.

### 2030 Objective 17.

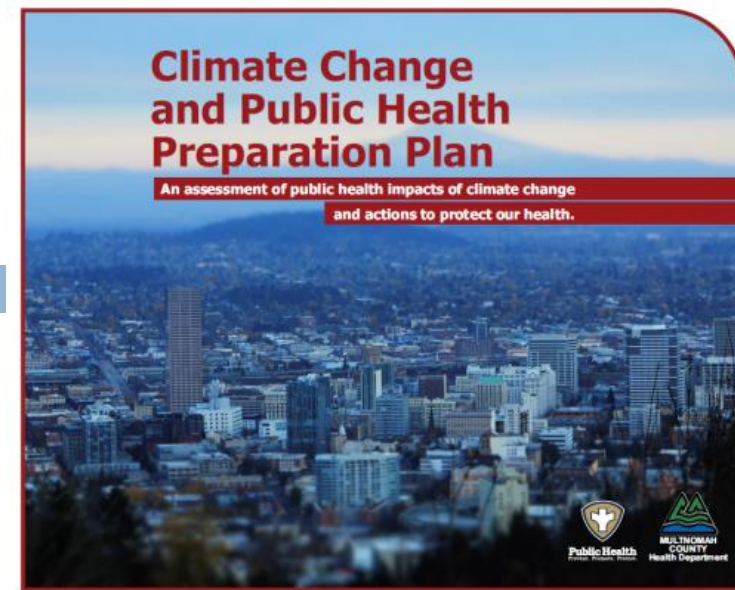
#### Adapt successfully to a changing climate.

*Climate change is already affecting Portland and Multnomah County. To adapt, the region must understand and prepare for change. This work has already begun. In 2002, for example, the Portland Water Bureau analyzed potential impacts of climate change on supply and demand for potable water. At a regional level, the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute and University of Washington Climate Impacts Group are leaders in advanced scientific research on likely climate change impacts.*



# Our Adaptation Plan

- Gathered local climate projections
- Brainstormed health outcomes
- Collected data
- Listed existing and new health interventions
- Assessed capacity to deliver interventions, identify needed resources
- Developed a plan, implement and monitor



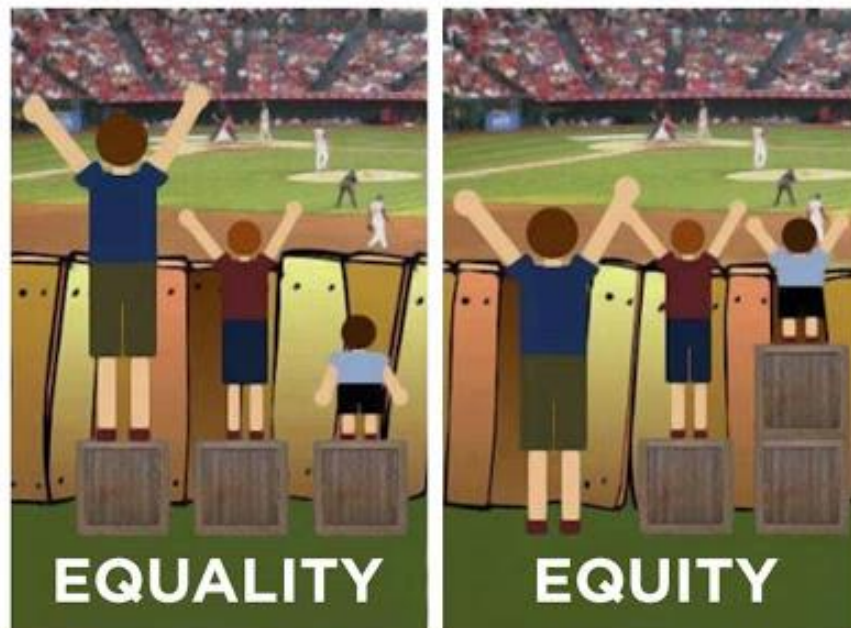
## Where Does Equity “Fit”?

# Applying an equity lens

Health equity is the fair and just distribution of power and resources

Health inequities are unjust and avoidable, for example, by incorporating democratic leadership in your decision making process

Health disparities are difference, positive or negative, in health outcomes





# Putting equity into action

**OUTCOME -**  
ensuring what we do  
benefits communities  
disproportionately  
impacted

**PROCESS –** ensuring  
how we do what we  
do is inclusive



# Outcome Areas



## Setting up our Process to achieve intentional Equitable Outcomes

- ❑ Shifts in Social Norms
- ❑ Strengthened Organizational Capacity
- ❑ Strengthened Alliances
- ❑ Strengthened Base of Support
- ❑ Improved Policies
- ❑ Changes in Impact

# Sample outcomes

- Increased # of staff hired and retained who reflect communities most affected by inequities
- Increase quantity and quality (especially around decision making authority) of partnerships with communities most affected by inequities
- Increased emphasis on integrating both qualitative and quantitative data
- Increase sense of staff pride in organization's goals and identity around racial equity
- Stronger understanding of intersectionality of racism and other social oppressions

# Purpose

*Partners at all levels align around transformative values, relationships; emphasis on doing less harm and supporting actions that heal and transform.*

- What is our institution's purpose toward equity?
- How are we clearly defining it and ensuring there is a shared understanding?
- Do we have the right people around us to achieve it?
- How can we give employees a greater sense of meaning in what they do around equity?



# Process

- How are we meaningfully including or excluding people who are affected in the development of climate plans?
- What policies contribute to the exclusion of communities most affected by the health inequities that will result from climate change?
- Are there empowering processes at every human touchpoint?
- What processes or health interventions are traumatizing and how do we improve them?

# Power

- What are the benefits and burdens that communities experience with changes in our climate?
- What is our decision making structure? Who decides? Who is accountable? What happens when accountability does not happen?
- How is developing a plan to help folks adapt to climate change shifting power dynamics to better integrate voices and priorities of communities most affected?

# People

- Who is positively and negatively affected by local climate impacts and how?
- How are people differently situated in terms of the barriers they experience? I.e. how is an older woman of color in affordable housing in an urban heat island positioned to change her vulnerability? Can she change her housing? Plant and maintain trees? Buy an air conditioner? Get transportation to a cooling center?
- Are people traumatized by our decisions regarding adaptation?

# Place

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- How are we accounting for people's emotional safety? Their need to feel valued?
- How are we considering people's spiritual history related to our communities?
- How are public resources and investments distributed geographically?

**Power, Process** - Who decides where public parks go? What is the criteria?

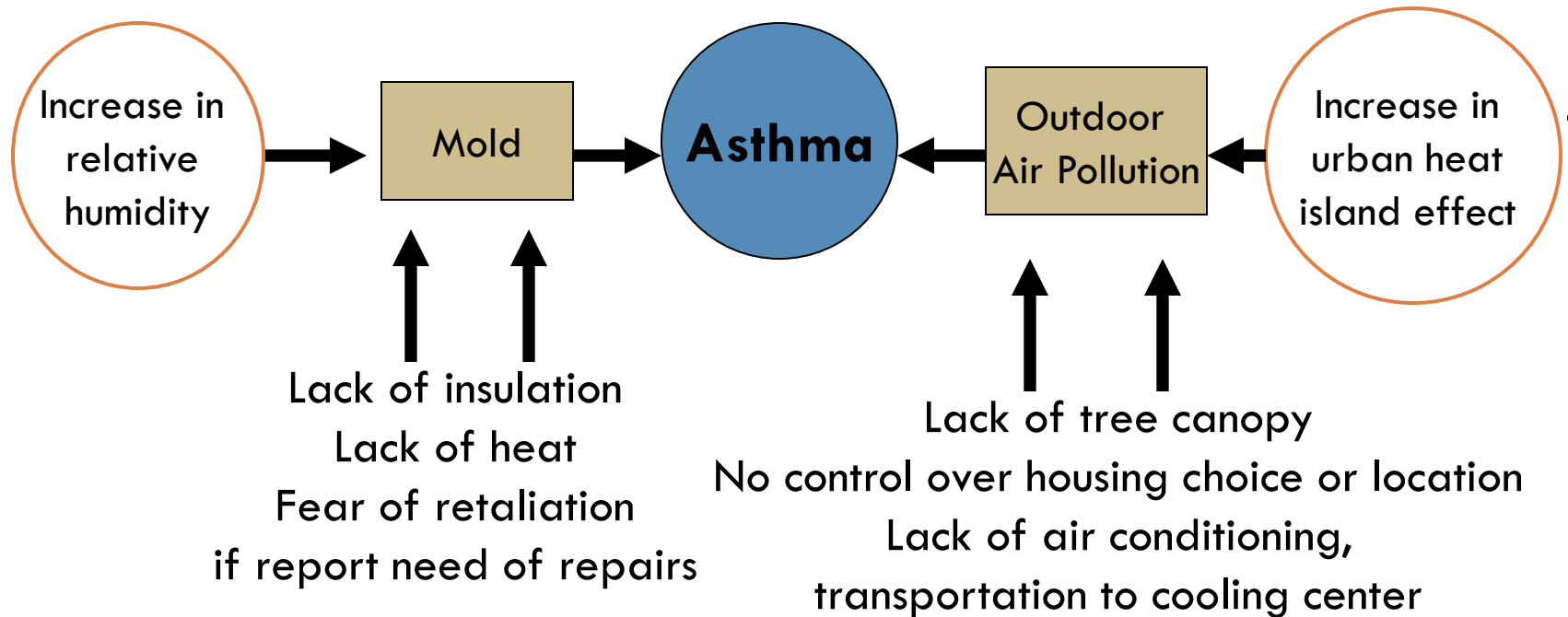
**People** – What linguistic and cultural barriers prevent family from accessing health services?

**Process** – What is income qualification for energy assistance or weatherization? How long is the waitlist? Who makes decisions on funding? Can that change?

**Place** – Are there policies that can shift that would ensure better access to greenspaces, parks, services? And would also ensure housing in safe, healthy and stable across income brackets?

**Increase in warmer wetter winters**

**Increase hotter, drier summers**



# Are We Ready Yet?

- How do we create a safe, trusted space?
- Being transparent about intention versus impact
- Sharing our truth
- Knowing when to step up, and when to step back
- Truly being humble...I mean, truly (what is the perception of me in the room as a white, middle class, government worker? What is my privilege? What power do I have that others may not?)
- Doing the deep, hard inner work. Choose the inner path.