



# Sustainability 2030 Annual Report

PPW Sustainable Resources Division

September 2022

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# Introduction

## Who We Are

### Planning and Public Works Sustainable Resources Division

Pierce County (County) Planning and Public Works (PPW) Sustainable Resources Division supports vibrant communities through promoting a clean, sustainable environment.

Our staff work on the following:

- Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction
- Solid waste (garbage and recycling) management
- Transportation options for residents and commuters
- A robust environmental education program that serves residents of all ages throughout Pierce County

### Sustainability in Pierce County

The PPW Sustainable Resources Sustainability 2030 Team promotes sustainable efforts in County government operations and throughout the larger community, with a primary focus on implementing the proposed actions in *Sustainability 2030: Pierce County's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan* (Plan), an effort referred to as Sustainability 2030.

To implement the plan and accomplish actions in this report, five staff collaborate with colleagues throughout the Sustainable Resources Division, including two Transportation Demand Management staff who moved into our division in 2022, as well as other PPW divisions, County departments, and external partners.

### Letter from the Sustainable Resources Division Manager

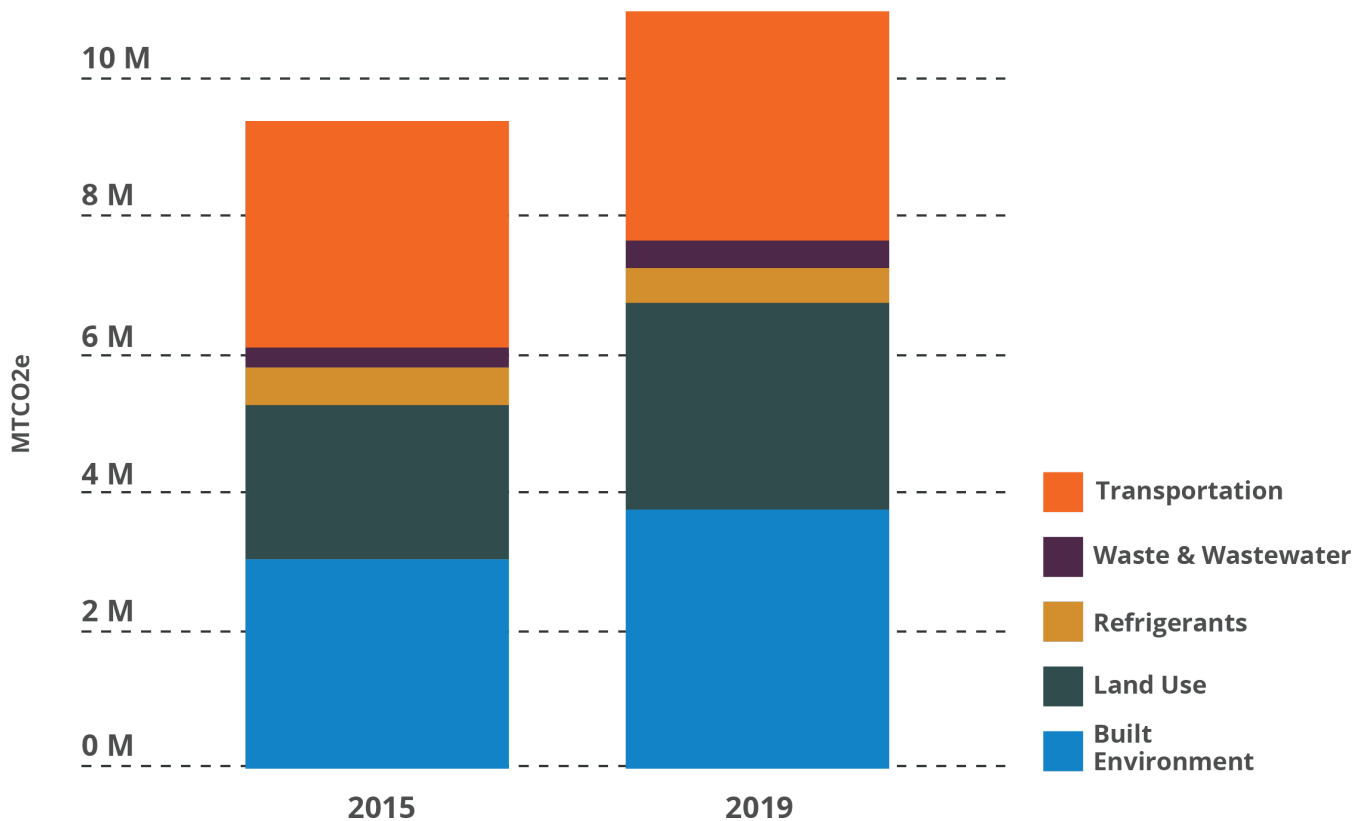
Passed by the Pierce County Council (Council) on March 23, 2021, and signed by Executive Dammeier on April 15, 2021, Sustainability 2030 is an ambitious plan to reduce County government and communitywide GHG emissions 45 percent by 2030. Pursuing this goal takes all of us working together to make innovative and effective decisions that elevate equitable GHG emissions reduction solutions for all. With 77 actions called for in the Plan, we cannot do this work alone. We must continue to support the critical work of partner organizations because we all have a role to play in transitioning to a more sustainable community.

Since April 2021, we've made considerable progress working across departments to implement the Sustainability 2030 Plan and integrate sustainability into County work beyond Plan actions. We're also pleased to have been awarded a 2021 Healthy Communities Award from the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department. Below are a few of our accomplishments:

- Added trees to keep our communities cool and our waters clean.
- Added trails to keep our communities moving and outdoors.
- Pivoted to flexible and remote work environments to reduce commuting and keep people safe.
- Helped people save energy and improve their homes.
- Convened sustainability practitioners across jurisdictions to share best practices.
- Created the Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy + Resiliency (C-PACER) Program to help buildings become more efficient and resilient.



**Figure 1. Executive Dammeier signs the Sustainability 2030 Plan in April 2021**



**Figure 2. Communitywide, GHG emissions increased between 2015 and 2019**

While we've come a long way in achieving the actions we committed to, we have a long way to go to reach our 45 percent emissions-reduction goal. Recently we have learned that, from 2015 to 2019, GHG emissions in Pierce County increased 16 percent (or 9 percent per capita). To protect our communities from the impacts of GHG pollution, we need to aggressively reverse this trend.

What's next? We are looking forward to the 2023 update of the Sustainability 2030 Plan as an opportunity to include more community feedback, align actions with other ongoing County plans, and improve actions that will deliver significant and equitable GHG emissions reductions. The Sustainability 2030 Plan is more than simply a GHG emissions reduction plan. It's about the future our community wants for Pierce County and ensuring that the next generation of residents can lead healthy, prosperous, enriching lives with all the benefits of a healthy environment and sustainable economy.








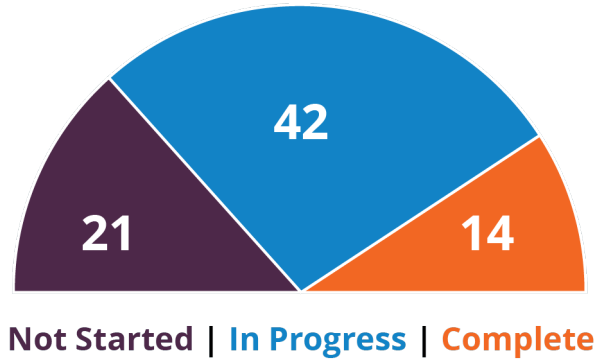
Ryan Dicks  
PPW Sustainable Resources Division Administrator

# Sustainability 2030 Plan Overview

The Sustainability 2030 Plan outlines a ten-year goal and actions to take to reduce GHG emissions across County government operations and the larger community.

The Plan includes 77 actions in five focus areas:

-  Energy and Built Environment
-  Transportation
-  Consumption and Waste Management
-  Carbon Sequestration
-  Education and Outreach



To date, 14 actions are complete or ongoing, 42 actions are in progress, and 21 actions have not been started.

We exceeded our goal of completing six actions by the end of 2021 and have already met our goal of completing 14 actions by the end of 2022.

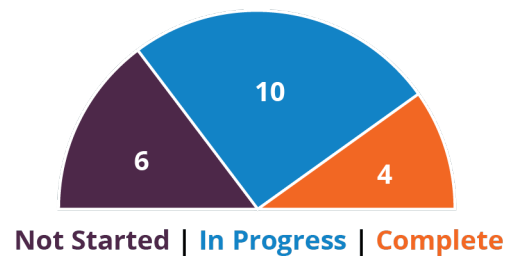
## Plan Progress Highlights

The lists on the following pages highlight selected achievements and updates since April 2021 and are not an exhaustive report on the status of all 77 actions. The dashboard graphics in each section indicate status to date for all actions in each area.

### Energy and Built Environment

#### Completed and/or ongoing:

- **County energy performance (EBE-7):** Facilities Management has completed energy benchmarking for the six buildings required to comply with the Clean Building Standard. Next steps have been identified for buildings not currently meeting the energy use intensity target.
- **C-PACER (EBE-14):** The Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy + Resiliency (C-PACER) Program, passed by Council in March 2022, went through a stakeholder review process and opened for applications in August 2022. Two applications have been received to date.



**In progress:**

- **Municipal building electrification study (EBE-6):** Facilities Management completed ten electric vehicle supply equipment assessments. Assessments continue through fall 2022.
- **Expand tree programs (EBE-9):** Pierce County Parks Department (Parks), PPW Surface Water Management (SWM), and PPW Sustainable Resources Division (SRD) received a \$37,200 state grant to partner with the Tacoma Tree Foundation on a pilot tree planting project (Green Blocks) in Parkland through July 2023. Additionally, SWM is providing funding to the Tacoma Tree Coupon Program to provide affordable trees to the wider Pierce County community, and Parks is expanding its tree giveaway program.
- **Make renewable energy projects easier (EBE-11):** The Building & Code Enforcement Division approved and put into practice a new method to improve efficiencies in the permitting process for solar panel installation.
- **Efficient lighting (EBE-19):** All streetlights (for which changeouts are possible) have been changed by PPW to LEDs, and replacement/upgrading to LED lighting is included in Facilities Management's building assessment. Recent upgrades to LED light fixtures at Remann Hall reduced lighting energy use by 81 percent and will continue to save \$4,996 per year.
- **Green power purchasing (EBE-20):** Facilities Management and SRD staff discussed green power purchasing options with a local utility and are creating a summary of findings on opportunities, costs, and potential barriers.



Completed in 2020, Pierce County Parks integrated **sustainable and salvaged building materials in the construction of the Frederickson Community Center** in Cross Park. Cross Park and the community center also feature sustainable stormwater management, all-electric building design, and electric vehicle (EV) charging stations!



The Washington State Building Code Council adopted a new **commercial building code** in April 2022 that will require the use of heat pump technology for space and water heating starting July 2023. This is expected to significantly reduce operational GHG emissions in new commercial and multi-family buildings.

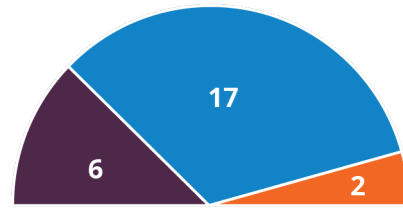




## Transportation

### Completed and/or ongoing:

- **Supporting regional/state electrification efforts (T-5):** The Sustainable Resources Division has provided feedback to the *Washington State Plan for Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Deployment* and participates in utility focus groups for EV charging programs.
- **Biodiesel usage (T-10):** Biodiesel usage in PPW Equipment Services Section vehicles and equipment has exceeded 93 percent and is expected to reach or exceed 97 percent by the end of 2022.



Not Started | In Progress | Complete

### In progress:

- **Fleet electrification (T-8):** Facilities Management and Fleet staff are developing a plan for fleet vehicle charging infrastructure, which will support future EV acquisition. Initial sites have been identified for charger installations.
- **Hybrid sheriff vehicles (T-9):** In 2022, Fleet staff ordered 31 hybrid pursuit vehicles, and is evaluating the purchase of two electric vehicles for sheriff administrative use.
- **Regulations to support EVs and active transportation (T-12):** The Council passed electric vehicle (EV)-ready legislation in new one-family and two-family dwellings; these measures were subsequently passed by the Washington State Building Code Council in November 2021.
- **Regional teleworking (T-13):** The Sustainable Resources Division recently submitted a Regional Mobility Grant to address reducing drive-alone trips into King County; the grant includes promoting teleworking.
- **ORCA usage (T-14):** Pierce Trips programming continues to support over 50 employers throughout the region. Pierce Trips calendar users have logged nearly 12,000 ORCA-eligible trips since April 2021.
- **Low-carbon aviation fuel (T-18):** The reliable availability of low-lead and low-carbon liquid fuels is not expected until roughly 2030. The Airport & Ferry Division is exploring installation of an aircraft charger at Thun Field late in 2023 or in 2024.
- **Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure (T-21):** Parkland and Pipeline Trail projects are progressing through design with construction planned for 2023, led by the Parks Department. Additionally, PPW has installed 2.6 miles of bike lanes (stripes and signage) since April 2021.
- **Employee parking practices (T-22):** Facilities Management has started reestablishing baseline data on parking lots and structures associated, owned, or leased by the County in downtown Tacoma.
- **EV infrastructure planning (T-24):** Public EV charging stations will be installed at three Parks locations in 2023. The Sustainability 2030 Collaborative (local jurisdiction staff) met in spring 2022 to discuss resources for public EV charging in their communities.



## Consumption and Waste Management

### Completed and/or ongoing:

- **Targeted recycling campaigns (CWM-1):** In 2021, in partnership with Communications staff, the Division created targeted social media campaigns to educate residents on recycling high-GHG-reduction materials (including paper, metal, and yard waste).



Not Started | In Progress | Complete

### In progress:

- **Landfill methane capture and GHG reduction (CWM-2):** Plans are in the works to add a compactor at the Purdy Transfer Station, which will reduce hauling trips between the transfer station and the landfill.
- **Business recycling assistance (CWM-4):** In 2021, the Sustainable Resources Division partnered with City of Tacoma to launch the Washington Materials Marketplace, an online network of businesses, organizations, and entrepreneurs diverting hard-to-recycle waste from the landfill.
- **Internal recycling and waste reduction support (CWM-8):** The first biannual audit of County recycling container volumes and contamination levels was conducted in summer 2022. The Sustainable Resources Division is creating a recycling guide for custodial staff.
- **Solid and Hazardous Waste Management Plan update (CWM-10):** The SHWMP, which includes a new section addressing Extended Producer Responsibility, was adopted by the Council in 2022. Specific requirements for battery recycling will be included in the five-year update.

### Improving Processes, Reducing Waste

In addition to working on many of the County’s internal Sustainability 2030 Plan actions, **Facilities Management** is also conducting a process improvement project for procuring and managing tools and supplies to reduce waste.

Through implementing fully virtual new employee orientations, distributing materials online, and digitizing personnel files, **Human Resources** has saved hundreds of thousands of sheets of paper.

**PPW Traffic Operations** continues a program started in 2019 to refurbish traffic signs with new reflective sheeting, saving electricity and an average of \$19 per sign.

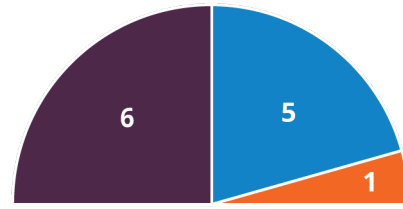




## Carbon Sequestration

### Completed and/or ongoing:

- **County natural lands inventory (CS-12):** The Parks Department inventoried and assessed approximately 4,375 acres of land in 2021 with property maps, field assessment data, and photographs.



Not Started | In Progress | Complete

### In progress:

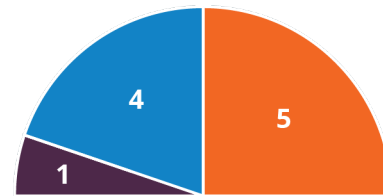
- **County conservation plan (CS-1):** The Sustainable Resources Division has begun identifying stakeholder and scoping work for this effort, which will address potential lands and strategies for carbon sequestration and ecosystem services.
- **Partner with tribes to sequester carbon (CS-4):** Sustainable Resources Division continues to connect with local tribes through participating in an indigenous carbon conference and related meetings.
- **Conservation Futures program code updates (CS- 5):** The Sustainable Resources Division and Parks Department staff are coordinating the addition of a carbon sequestration metric in program-scoring criteria, as part of current program code updates.



## Education and Outreach

### Completed and/or ongoing:

- **Sustainability 2030 Collaborative (EO-1):** The Sustainable Resources Division has hosted two meetings to date and engaged 29 staff from 16 local jurisdictions to build partnerships and share sustainability resources.
- **GHG educational workshops (EO-2):** Nine unique Sustainable Solutions workshops have been held virtually, reaching nearly 500 households since April 2021.



Not Started | In Progress | Complete

- **Youth Engaged in Sustainable Solutions (YESS) (EO-5):** YESS network participated in Orca Recovery Day, the Tacoma Shoreline Survey, and hosted an online Say YESS for Earth Month challenge.
- **K-12 teacher curriculum support (EO-6):** The Pierce County Environmental Education team partnered with the City of Tacoma, Tacoma Public Utilities, and the Pierce Conservation District to offer free STEM teacher workshops and a climate literacy curriculum, reaching over 600 teachers.
- **Employee sustainability newsletter (EO-8):** Engages approximately 2,800 County employees each month.

**In progress:**

- **Community engagement effort (EO-3):** An Equity and Engagement associate planner was recently hired to plan engagement in frontline communities, focusing on updating the Sustainability 2030 Plan in 2023.
- **Employee sustainability training (EO-4):** The Sustainability 2030 Team hosted a Sustainability 2030 Lunch & Learn session through Human Resources with attendance from over 60 employees. Additional Lunch & Learn sessions and sustainability curricula are being developed.



**Figure 3. Poster contest winner (an activity during Say YESS for Earth Month)**



**Environmentally Friendly Products from Wastewater**

The Chambers Creek Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant produces valuable products that benefit the environment. They include recycled water that can be used for irrigation, biogas that can be used as an alternative to natural gas, and [SoundGRO](#) fertilizer that puts valuable nutrients back into the soil.

**What is SoundGRO?**  
 SoundGRO is a pelletized fertilizer rich in nitrogen and phosphorous. It creates healthier soil and plants that produce more flowers, fruits and vegetables. Check out the tomato plants below grown with and without SoundGRO and find live examples of this experiment in our Chambers Creek garden!

**Figure 4. Our newsletter encourages all County employees to be champions for GHG emissions reduction.**

## Incorporating Sustainability into the 2024 Comprehensive Plan

Sustainable Resources staff continue to support integrating sustainability into the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Review and Periodic Update, including activities such as outreach and engagement.

### Environmental Education Opens Five New School Gardens

This past school year, the Environmental Education team celebrated sustainable school gardens by installing five new learning landscapes, as well as continuing upkeep in several previously established gardens.



### Feedback from County Employees

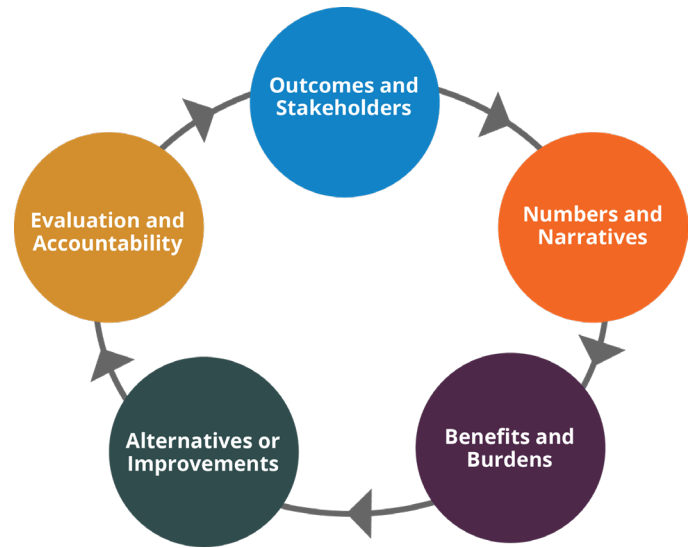
In May 2022, the Sustainable Resources Division surveyed Pierce County employees and received 678 responses, hearing these sustainability priorities:

- Teleworking when possible
- Workplace recycling
- EV charging at County facilities
- Additional training and learning opportunities, especially around:
  - How to recycle right
  - How to repair items and keep them out of the landfill
  - Zero-waste gardening
  - Installing rain gardens

# Centering Equity in Sustainability 2030

The Pierce County Sustainability 2030 Team is committed to advancing **equity** as we implement and update the Sustainability 2030 Plan. This includes running each external Plan action through an **equity assessment** and centering **frontline communities** in Plan engagement and implementation. The benefits of GHG emissions reduction are abundant and should be experienced by all, and this is how we work towards equitable distribution.

Broader County equity efforts include the online Equity Index, an interactive tool and map that visually highlights disparities in our community. Working in aligned efforts and values helps promote County cohesion and advance equity for all.



**Figure 5. Components of the equity assessment process**

## Definitions



**Equity**

Equity is achieved when all people—regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, income, neighborhood, or other factor—have access to the resources and opportunities necessary to reach their full potential.



**Equity Assessment**

Equity assessments proactively seek to eliminate racial inequities while advancing equity for all. This process involves collecting and analyzing information to determine the extent to which a practice, policy, program, action, etc., is equitable to each member of the community. It is often presented in the form of questions grouped into five broad categories as shown in the process diagram in Figure 6. Equity assessments provide opportunities for deep examinations into the root causes of inequities, helping us better understand how to serve our communities more equitably.



**Frontline Communities**

Those who face historical and current inequities in multiple ways, whether by being confronted with systemic barriers, being historically underserved, or both. These communities include those who are and will be disproportionately burdened by climate change, often experiencing the first and most acute impacts.

## What Could a More Equitable Pierce County Look Like?

The equity assessment process helps us identify desired equity outcomes, such as those listed below, that represent what a more equitable Pierce County could look like. These outcomes are expected to evolve as we continue to build relationships with and engage frontline communities.



### Energy and Built Environment

- Achieve a **high quality of life and resilience** while reducing the cost of living, reducing the impacts of extreme-heat days, supporting the retrofit of homes, increasing access to renewable energy, and improving indoor and outdoor air quality in our communities.
- Historically **underserved communities bearing the brunt of climate impacts are prioritized** in new tools, incentives, and programs that save energy and improve homes.
- Programs that improve buildings and our energy system do not negatively impact housing affordability and attainment and instead, **promote affordability and keep people in their homes.**



### Transportation

- All Pierce County residents have **access to clean and affordable transportation options** that get them where they need and want to go.
- Available **transportation options work for all residents**, including those with specific mobility needs and/or affordability considerations.
- Communities living in areas historically harmed by industrial and transportation emissions are **prioritized in transportation emissions-reduction efforts.**



### Consumption and Waste Management

- **Waste disposal and recycling services are accessible to all.** Historically underserved communities are prioritized to ensure that these services are provided equitably.
- Communities have the social infrastructure needed to **manage food waste in a way that prioritizes feeding people** and where disposal is the last option.



### Carbon Sequestration

- **Ecosystem services from terrestrial and marine ecosystems are maximized** for the benefit and resilience of frontline communities.
- Conserved lands include **green space that directly benefits frontline communities.**
- **Tribes lead the way on carbon** markets and marine carbon sequestration.
- **Rural communities are supported** by the conservation of natural resource lands and sustainable jobs in forestry and agriculture.



## Education and Outreach

- **Frontline communities are centered, valued, and prioritized** in engagement and outreach efforts. Partnership and engagement opportunities and avenues for Plan collaboration are accessible to all.
- **Community workshops are influenced by community priorities.** Additionally, frontline communities are meaningfully involved in the development, facilitation, and participation of these workshops.
- **Frontline community members and those with barriers** to employment entering the workforce are **well resourced to work in green jobs.**

## In the Community

Since the passage of the Plan in 2021, the Sustainable Resources Division has connected with community members across the County in many ways. In addition to actions in the Education and Outreach focus area of the Plan, some efforts by our Sustainability, Environmental Education; Waste Reduction & Recycling; and Transportation Demand Management teams include the following:



Sharing information about Sustainability 2030 in person and live online with over **700** community members (since spring 2022).



Hearing from over **2,200** Pierce County residents through a waste and sustainability survey.



Helping **6** schools through the School Recycling Technical Assistance program: conducting school recycling assessments, updating educational materials, providing indoor containers, and presenting information about proper recycling to students and staff.



Donating water bottle-filling stations to **4** schools (that have completed recycling assessments).



Hosting the first Recycling 101 virtual class, with **59** registrants and **19** attendees.



Fulfilling an average of **70** requests each month from Pierce County residents for recycling reminder magnets.



Hosting **7** Pierce Trips campaigns—over **1,200** calendar users logged nearly **200,000** non-drive-alone trips since April 2021.



# Our Community's Vision for Sustainability in 2030



Figure 6. The Sustainability 2030 vision tree with leaves from community members

When we asked people what they wanted to see in their local communities in 2030, we heard the most interest in the following:

1. Clean air
2. More and better access to green spaces
3. Reducing waste and improving recycling
4. Preserving and planting trees
5. More sidewalks, bike lanes, and public transit

# Where Are Our Emissions Coming From?

The Sustainability 2030 Plan calls for Pierce County to reduce GHG emissions by 45 percent by 2030, from 2015 levels—a target based on Washington State’s emissions-reduction goal. These goals apply to communitywide emissions (geographic) and emissions from the County as an operating organization (operational).

In 2022, we conducted inventories for Pierce County’s geographic and operational GHG emissions for the years 2015 (baseline year) and 2019. This includes updates to our previous 2015 geographic inventory, using an updated methodology.

## Communitywide Emissions (Geographic)

In 2019, Pierce County’s largest contributors of GHG emissions communitywide were tree loss, passenger vehicles, and natural gas and electricity used in buildings.

Between 2015 and 2019, total GHG emissions increased by 16 percent. Population increased 7 percent during this same period; and per capita emissions increased by 9 percent.

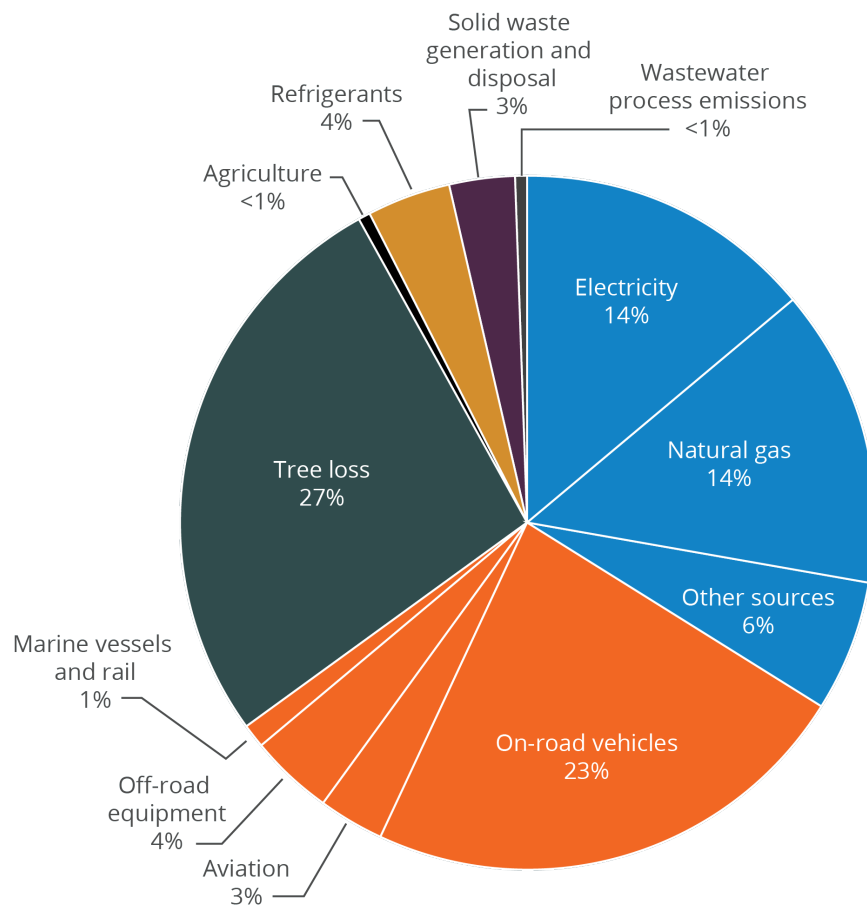


Figure 7. Pierce County’s communitywide (geographic) emissions in 2019

# WHAT'S DRIVING CHANGES IN OUR EMISSIONS OVER TIME?

**Top contributors** to change in emissions between the 2015 and 2019 greenhouse gas inventories

 Drivers of **emissions increases** include:



Land use

+ 774k MTCO<sub>2</sub>e



More fossil fuels based electricity

+ 401k MTCO<sub>2</sub>e



Growing population

+ 294k MTCO<sub>2</sub>e



Industrial processes

+168k MTCO<sub>2</sub>e

 Drivers of **emissions reductions** include:



Improved vehicle efficiency

- 395k MTCO<sub>2</sub>e



Decreased residential energy use (per home)

- 370k MTCO<sub>2</sub>e



Decreased commercial energy use (per job)

- 285k MTCO<sub>2</sub>e



Decreased waste generation (per person)

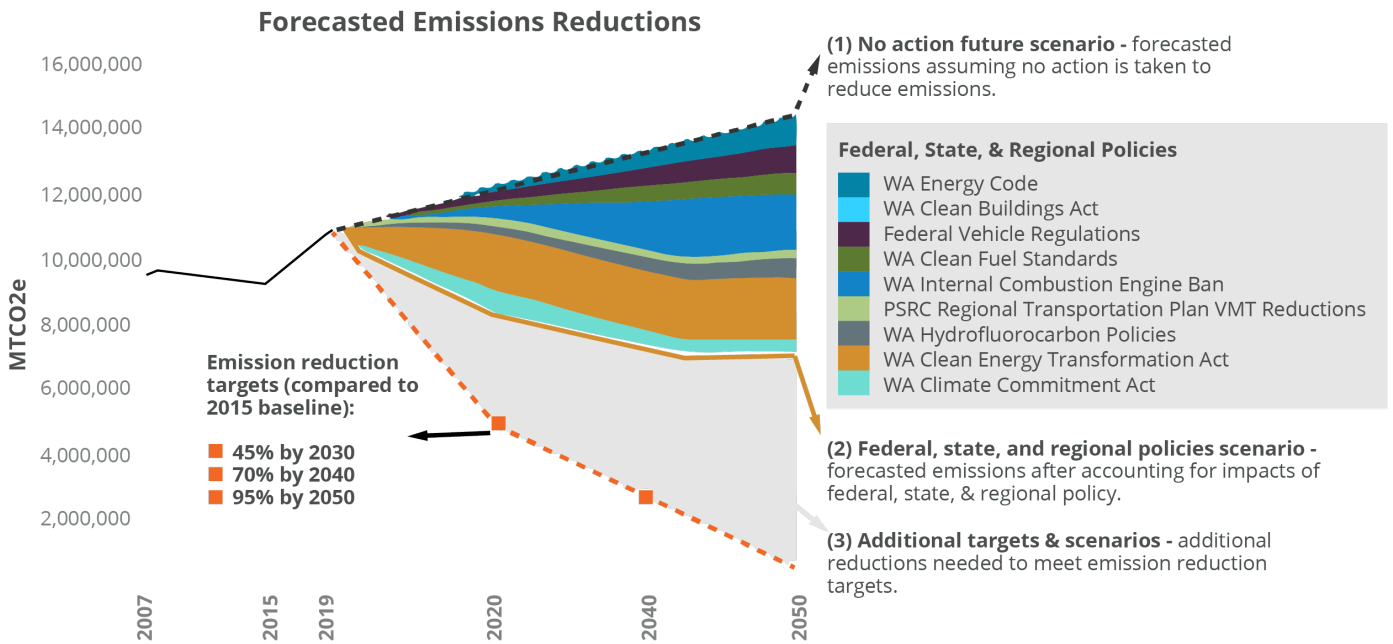
- 73k MTCO<sub>2</sub>e

**Notes** MTCO<sub>2</sub>e is metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, which is a standardized way of measuring greenhouse gas emissions. K stands for thousands.

# What Will It Take To Reach Our Target?

Actions by industries, governments, businesses, and individuals will be needed to achieve our emissions-reduction target. Federal, state, and regional policies (as of mid-2022) are estimated to reduce the communitywide geographic emissions over time, but additional action beyond these policies will be needed.

Potential additional actions could include implementing local policies and programs to reduce tree loss; reducing the use of single-occupancy, internal combustion engine vehicles; and transitioning buildings to clean, fossil-free energy sources.



**Figure 8. Forecasted emissions reductions for Pierce County, accounting for federal, state, and regional policies as of mid-2022. Reduction targets shown beyond 2030 are hypothetical examples**

**Notes** MTCO<sub>2e</sub> is metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, which is a standardized way of measuring greenhouse gas emissions. PSRC is Puget Sound Regional Council; VMT is vehicle miles traveled; WA is the State of Washington.

## County Government Operations (Operational)

In 2019, Pierce County's largest contributors of GHG emissions in our own operations were transportation (especially gasoline from fleet vehicles and employee commuting) and buildings (especially use of natural gas). Between 2015 and 2019, total County operational GHG emissions increased by 2 percent. The number of employees was similar for each of the two years.

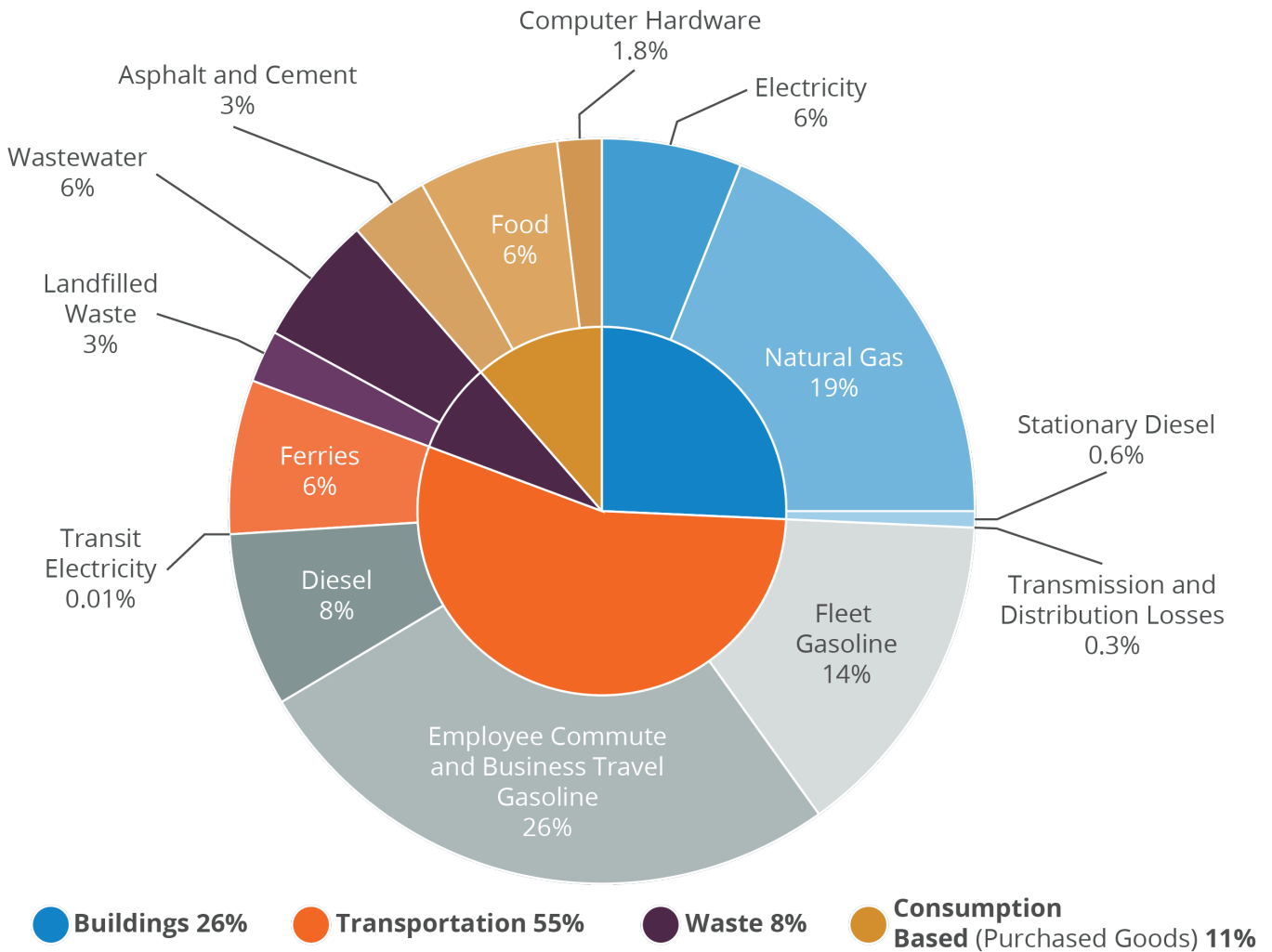


Figure 9. Pierce County's government operational emissions in 2019, by sector and source

## What Will It Take To Reach Our Target?

Continued efforts to electrify transportation and buildings, as well as employee adoption of sustainable commute options, will reduce operational emissions in the years to come.

We're already seeing an increase in employees working remotely over the past couple years. The number of employees with active telework agreements has grown from around 100 in early 2021 to over 900 in September 2022.

The next operational inventory will provide additional insights into the effect that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on operational emissions, and the extent to which emissions patterns from this period persist.

## Major Program Budget Expenditures

Major 2022 Expenditures		Anticipated 2023 Major Expenditures
Operational Greenhouse Gas Inventory <sup>a</sup>	\$16,230	Conservation Plan
Geographic Greenhouse Gas Inventory <sup>b</sup>	\$25,000	Communitywide EV Infrastructure Plan

### Notes

EV means electric vehicle.

<sup>a</sup>Consultant support. <sup>b</sup>Consultant support as part of Puget Sound Regional Emissions Analysis.

# Looking Ahead: 2023 Update

Creating and sustaining systemic change to reduce GHG emissions requires a process to periodically reflect on what's working well and where adjustments should be made within this evolving field of research and practice. Updating the Sustainability 2030 Plan in 2023 will allow us to add, remove, refine, and adjust actions in consideration of the following:

- **Feedback** from frontline communities and stakeholders
- Further **assessment** of equity impacts
- **Changed circumstances** since the COVID-19 pandemic began
- Our updated **understanding of the largest emissions sources**
- Recent federal and state **legislation**
- Opportunities for **alignment with other County efforts**
- **Technological advances**

This report highlights some of the successes of this year and we look forward to continuing our efforts to implement the Sustainability 2030 Plan. We view this next update as an opportunity to include more community feedback, align actions with other ongoing County plans, and improve actions that will deliver significant and equitable emissions reductions.

Our collective work builds on prior County sustainability efforts, and we are excited to continue our collaboration with Pierce County departments, colleagues, partners, and residents.

## Contact Us

**Pierce County Planning and Public Works**

**Sustainable Resources Division**

[www.piercecountywa.gov/Sustainability](http://www.piercecountywa.gov/Sustainability)