Portland, OR

Portland placed 11th, maintaining its position from the previous Scorecard, and performed best in the transportation policy category. The city could boost its score in the future by making progress on buildings policies.

How Does Portland Stack Up to Peer Cities?

Community-Wide Initiatives (7.5 of 15 Points)
Portland’s Climate Action Plan establishes a community-wide GHG emissions reduction goal of 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. Based on emissions data from past years, ACEEE projects that the city will not achieve its near-term goal of reducing community-wide GHG emissions 40% below 1990 levels by 2030. Though the local utility reports community-wide energy use to the city, energy data is not available to the public. Portland’s Zero Cities Project, which aims to achieve increased racial equity and a net-zero-carbon building sector, recruited Verde, a local community-based organization, to identify zero-carbon buildings policies that intersect with community priorities. Several other community-based organizations have joined the project’s planning process. The city advances accountability to goals around energy equity by using an equity assessment tool during budgeting.

Buildings Policies (13.5 of 30 Points)
The State of Oregon requires its local jurisdictions to follow the 2014 Oregon Energy Efficiency Specialty Code for residential and commercial construction. Oregon requires newly constructed buildings to meet solar- and EV-readiness requirements. Per the Green Building Policy, all new building construction and major renovations of over 50,000 square feet must achieve LEED Gold certification. Portland supports the development of a clean energy workforce through the Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund. The city has adopted benchmarking policies for commercial buildings and single-family homes and requires home sellers to disclose energy performance scores. The city offers financing options and development bonuses for commercial property owners to pursue energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy installations.

Transportation Policies (19.5 of 30 Points)
Portland has several initiatives to reduce GHG emissions and energy use in the transportation sector. Of low-income households in Portland, 95.3% have access to high-quality transit. With 54.7 ports per 100,000 people, the city has a moderate number of EV charging station ports available for public use. The city has a Sustainable Freight Strategy in place which identifies key freight objectives. As part of the city’s Climate Action Plan, the city council has adopted targets to reduce VMT 30% below 2008 levels by 2030. Transportation entities that serve Portland have received roughly $318.78 per capita on average in local transit funding annually between 2015 and 2019, a moderate to high funding level.

Energy and Water Utilities (11.5 of 15 Points)
Compared to other utilities, Portland General Electric (PGE) and NW Natural show moderate savings as a percentage of sales for electric and natural gas efficiency programs, respectively. The city, state, and utilities offer a portfolio of energy efficiency programs for low-income residents, including comprehensive programs and health and safety measures. Energy Trust of Oregon, the statewide energy efficiency program implementer, offers comprehensive programs for multifamily properties. Portland’s Commercial Building Energy Performance Reporting Ordinance requires energy utilities to provide building owners with energy consumption data. To support decarbonization efforts, the city has committed to a transition to 100% renewable energy for community-wide energy needs by 2050, and city staff regularly participate in state and Public Utility Commission legislative rulemaking proceedings on behalf of decarbonization. PGE set a stringent goal to achieve net-zero GHG emissions by 2040.

Local Government Operations (7.5 of 10 Points)
Portland has GHG emissions reduction, energy reduction, and clean energy goals for municipal operations. It is on track to meet its goal of reducing city government GHG emissions 53% below FY2006 levels by 2030. Portland has a policy of procuring the most efficient vehicle possible for its intended function and 14% of its fleet vehicles are now energy efficient. The city has converted all streetlights to LEDs, and has installed 700 kW of solar systems on municipal facilities. We were unable to confirm that it uses inclusive procurement policies for energy projects. Portland has a Strategic Planning Group that manages a project prioritization process for energy efficiency.