

STAFF REPORT FOR COMMITTEE ON RACIAL EQUITY

PROPOSED SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS AND SITES POLICY

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ISSUE STATEMENT

Metro is working on an update to our existing Green Building Policy (adopted by the Metro Council in 2011) to reflect current best practices and advance Metro's climate, sustainability and racial equity goals. The updated policy will be called the "Sustainable Buildings and Sites Policy" and will apply to new construction, major renovation and operation of existing developed sites (including parks) and buildings owned and operated by Metro. Metro's existing green building policy is out-of-date and doesn't reflect current best practices; the goal of this proposed policy update is to ensure that Metro's facilities and investments reflect Metro's strategic priorities and commitment to advance climate and environmental justice and racial equity.

In summary, the updated policy will advance racial equity on Metro's projects by:

- Identifying racial equity outcomes and principles for all projects,
- Requiring new construction and major renovation projects to achieve the [Core Green Building Certification](#) that addresses the key environmental/climate justice and equity issues related to buildings, including: the climate impact of buildings, heat island effect, air quality (e.g., diesel pollution), healthy/nontoxic building materials, accessibility, equity in contracting, workforce diversity and respecting the cultural and historical significance of land where development occurs, and
- Requiring meaningful and inclusive community engagement on Metro construction projects subject to the policy, when appropriate.

To identify those policy outcomes, principles and requirements, staff applied Metro's racial equity framework to the development of the policy, including convening a racial equity team, incorporating prior community input on Metro facilities and engaging COBID-certified firms. This process is summarized below and described in depth in Attachment B.

COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT

The proposed updated policy will be considered by Council on October 13, 2022.

- *Resolution No. 22-5282: For the Purpose of Accepting an Updated Sustainable Buildings and Sites Policy and Authorizing the Chief Operating Office to Implement the Policy*

History of Council decisions connected to this policy:

- **In 2010** Metro Council adopted the Metro [Sustainability Plan for internal and business operations](#) which identifies the strategies and actions needed to achieve Metro's environmental sustainability goals for climate, toxics, waste, water and habitat. One of the high-priority actions identified in the plan was to adopt a Metro-wide green building policy to set standards for new construction, renovation and operation of buildings as well as sustainable site standards for Metro's developed parks and green spaces.
- **In 2011** the original version of the [Green Building Policy](#) was adopted by Metro Council. Sustainable site standards for new parks and facilities were never adopted as part of the original policy but are being addressed as part of this policy update.

QUESTION(S) for CORE

- How do you see this policy advancing racial equity and environmental justice in your community or in the communities you serve? Do you see any gaps?
- Before Council considers this policy update, does CORE have any questions or recommendations for Council on the policy implementation?

PROCESS TO APPLY METRO'S RACIAL EQUITY FRAMEWORK AND ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS TO DEVELOP THE UPDATED POLICY

Racial Equity Framework

Staff applied Metro's racial equity framework to inform development of the policy.

Following is a summary of that process:

1. Convened an internal racial equity team,
2. Identified who tends to benefit and be burdened by the process of selecting a site, constructing and operating Metro facilities,
3. Reviewed data sets from multiple sources (including Metro's [Regional Barometer](#)) to evaluate community conditions related to racial equity and impacts from construction projects,
4. Conducted stakeholder power analysis to determine who has influence to inform the policy decision as well as who is most impacted,
5. Reviewed and incorporated past input from community members related to Metro facilities, and
6. Engaged COBID-certified design and construction firms to get feedback on the proposed policy.

Applying this framework led Metro to:

1. Identify racial equity outcomes the policy will strive to achieve,
2. Include racial equity principles to guide projects subject to the policy,
3. Include policy requirements to achieve racial equity outcomes,
4. Identify best practices for meaningful and inclusive community engagement for projects subject to the policy,
5. Develop implementation strategies to reflect and address the needs of COBID firms.

Attachment B: A detailed summary of the process to apply Metro’s racial equity framework to inform the development of this updated policy is included in Attachment B as required material.

HOW THE PROPOSED POLICY UPDATE ADVANCES RACIAL EQUITY

Following is a summary of the goals and objectives in Metro’s *Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion* that the proposed policy update advances.

Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity GOALS that are most relevant to policy update:

Goal A	Metro convenes and supports regional partners to advance racial equity
Goal B	Metro meaningfully engages communities of color
Goal D	Metro creates safe and welcoming services, programs and destinations
Goal E	Metro's resource allocation advances racial equity

Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity & Inclusion OBJECTIVES that are most relevant to the policy update:

A.4	Work with regional partners to increase the utilization of local minority, women, and emerging small businesses and the number of skilled construction tradespeople of color.
B.1	Establish and strengthen relationships with communities of color.
B.3	Increase participation of communities of color in Metro decision-making.
D.1	Increase the number of individuals of color who access Metro services and facilities.
D.2	Metro’s properties are more welcoming and reflective of all cultures.
E.2	Advance social equity contracting at Metro.

Racial equity outcomes, principles and requirements in the policy

Applying a racial equity framework to the policy update resulted in the inclusion of racial equity outcomes, principles and requirements within the policy.

Racial equity outcomes

The policy strives to achieve the following racial equity outcomes (Section 3.1):

1. Metro buildings provide healthy, accessible, welcoming spaces where staff and visitors can thrive.
2. Metro’s buildings contribute to climate and environmental justice outcomes in the region.
3. Metro’s capital investments in buildings create opportunities for COBID-certified firms and advance construction workforce diversity.

Racial equity principles

To achieve the identified racial equity outcomes, the policy includes the following racial equity principles (Section 3.2) that policy requirements are designed to advance:

1. Prioritize sites that are served by public transit and are accessible by walking and biking.

2. Promote environmental justice by preventing and mitigating the negative impacts on adjacent communities related to siting and displacement, traffic, noise, and diesel emissions and other pollution from building and site construction.
3. Site and design buildings for climate adaptation, resiliency and to minimize urban heat island effect.
4. Ensure buildings and parks are welcoming to staff, the public, and all Metro constituents, including strategies like signage in multiple languages.
5. Ensure buildings and parks are accessible and inclusive to people with disabilities and include accessibility features for those with mobility, hearing or vision needs.
6. Minimize the use of toxic building materials and require the use of non/low-toxic chemicals for operations and maintenance.
7. Ensure equity in contracting and advance workforce diversity.
8. Respect culturally significant areas and honor the history of the original inhabitants of the land.

Community engagement requirements

Section 3.4 of the policy requires meaningful and inclusive engagement for projects subject to this policy, when appropriate, to incorporate community feedback, to elevate the voices of those who are most impacted by projects and who have historically had the least amount of influence, and to help inform, guide, and improve project outcomes.

Policy green building certification requirements that address racial equity

Core Green Building certification

New construction and major renovation projects must achieve Core Green Building Certification, which includes requirements that address the key environmental/climate justice and equity issues related to buildings, summarized below. These include: the climate impact of buildings, air quality, healthy/nontoxic building materials, accessibility, equity in contracting, workforce diversity and respecting the cultural and historical significance of land where development occurs.

To address **environmental and climate justice** while protecting ecology of place, Core certification requirements all new construction and major renovation must meet the following requirements:

- Achieve a 70% reduction in total energy consumption compared to a typical building,
- Prohibit combustion of fossil fuels,
- Demonstrate a 20% reduction in the embodied carbon (greenhouse gas emissions associated with producing building materials) of primary materials (wood, concrete, steel, etc.) compared to an equivalent baseline building,
- Select interior materials with lower than industry average carbon footprint,
- Design projects to be “zero ready” for electric vehicle charging and future installation of renewable energy systems,
- Avoid building on pristine greenfield, wilderness, prime farmland or in a floodplain, and preserve thriving vibrant ecological environments and habitats,

- Demonstrate how a project will restore or enhance the ecological performance of the site,
- Design on-site landscaping to emulate the native habitat of the site,
- Not use potable water for irrigation,
- Treat all stormwater on site, through natural or mechanical means and without chemicals,
- Eliminate toxins used in operations, and
- Address noise related to construction and operation of facilities.

To ensure **accessibility** and public safety of facilities, all new construction and major renovation must meet the following requirements:

- Follow principles of universal access including requiring that all projects safeguard access for those with physical disabilities through designs meeting either the Principles of Universal design, the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Guidelines, or international equivalent,
- Increase opportunities to access facilities in a variety of ways (beyond single occupancy vehicle use),
- Provide pedestrian routes, weather protection, and community advocacy in support of human-powered and public transportation,
- Make all primary transportation, roads and non-building infrastructure (e.g., plazas, seating or park space) equally accessible to all members of the public regardless of background, age, ability, and socioeconomic class— including people experiencing houselessness, and
- Design public realm features to be accessible to all members of society, including street furniture, public art, gardens, and benches.

To ensure **inclusive public participation and honoring of the cultural and historical context** of a place, new construction and major renovation must meet the following requirements:

- Assess cultural and social equity factors and needs in the community to inform design and process decisions,
- Integrate public art and design features intended for human delight and the celebration of culture, spirit, and place appropriate to the project's function, and
- Examine the historical, cultural, ecological, and climatic studies of the site.

To ensure **equity in contracting and workforce diversity**, new construction and major renovation projects must meet the following requirements:

- At least two project team organizations must have a [JUST label](#) (a “nutrition” label for socially just and equitable organizations),
- 20% of design contract and/or construction contracts, and 10% of maintenance contracts must be with JUST organizations that achieve the Diversity category, or are registered Minority, Woman, or Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (MWDDBE) organizations, or international equivalent, and

- 10% of the general contractor project contracts and/or project maintenance contracts employ workforce development/training/community benefits agreements, registered apprentice programs and similar programs.

Projects ineligible for Core certification

If a project is unable to achieve the Core Green Building Certification standard, the policy establishes a fallback sustainable building standard of LEED v.4.1 Rating System for Building Design and Construction (LEED BD+C) with some required credits to align with Metro sustainability and equity goals.

Sustainable site standards for parks

New construction and major renovation of Metro developed parks and green spaces over 2,000 square feet must meet the [SITES](#) Gold certification standard, which is designed to reduce water demand, filter and reduce stormwater runoff, provide wildlife habitat, reduce energy consumption, improve air quality, improve human health and increase outdoor recreation opportunities.

Requirements for all new construction and major renovation projects

All new construction and major renovation projects, regardless of size or certification standard must meet additional sustainability requirements, including:

- Exclude the use of fossil fuels and dedicated fossil fuel infrastructure,
- Include electric vehicle charging infrastructure,
- Reduce embodied carbon in primary materials by 20%,
- Evaluate highest and best use of rooftop space for onsite solar generation, green roof installation, and/or solar reflectivity,
- Reduce diesel emissions, and
- Conduct meaningful and inclusive engagement, when appropriate.

Existing Sites and Buildings

To address community feedback asking for ecological responsibility and accountability, the policy requires Metro's parks and natural areas to earn [Salmon-Safe certification](#) to validate Metro's responsible stewardship of water quality and habitat.

In the operation and maintenance of existing Metro buildings, Metro shall apply for the LEED Rating System for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance (LEED O+M) certification at the Silver level or higher. Existing LEED certified buildings will incrementally achieve higher certification, such as LEED Gold, Platinum or LEED Zero (carbon, waste, energy, water).

All existing Metro buildings, regardless of their eligibility for LEED O+M certification, shall meet the following sustainable operations requirements:

- Conduct energy audits and develop energy efficiency plans,
- Meet business recycling requirements and separate food waste

- Complete a sustainable roof assessment upon roof tear off or replacement to evaluate highest and best use of rooftop including solar generation, green roof installation and increasing solar reflectivity,
- Replace lighting fixtures and lamps with high efficiency LED alternatives,
- Select new appliances and equipment with highest Energy Star efficiency rating,
- Purchase EPA Water Sense certified fixtures,
- Develop and adopt operational policies and procedures that reduce use and exposure to environmental toxins, and
- Follow sustainability criteria during system upgrades by considering the long term environmental, human and financial impacts vs. considering mainly short-term financial cost.

Accountability and Progress Tracking

The policy includes the following measures to track progress and ensure accountability:

- Reporting on sustainability achievements and certification results at the end of each new construction or major renovation project,
- Annual reporting by facility of key projects completed and how they address Metro's sustainability and racial equity goals, and
- Annual reporting by the Sustainability Program of sustainability performance data.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Summary of proposed Sustainable Buildings and Sites Policy – required reading
- B. Summary of the process to apply Metro's racial equity framework and engage stakeholders to inform development of the policy update – required reading
- C. Full text of Proposed Sustainable Buildings and Sites Policy– optional reading