



Metro Councilor Hwang and Metro staff at the Metro Regional Center LEED ceremony.

# Sustainability Report

## For Fiscal Year 2022-23

# INTRODUCTION

## Advancing sustainability in Metro's internal operations

*We are leaders in demonstrating resource use and protection in a manner that enables people to meet current needs without compromising the needs of future generations, and while balancing the needs of the economy, environment, and society.*

- *Metro value of sustainability*

As a regional government committed to promoting sustainable communities, Metro also strives to demonstrate its values by making its own operations sustainable. With an extensive portfolio of sites, including visitor venues, parks, solid waste facilities, and office buildings, and serving millions of visitors and customers each year, Metro has a significant opportunity to reduce its impacts and advance positive progress on greater Portland's quality of life.

In 2003, the Metro Council set an ambitious target for internal operations to be sustainable within one generation, by 2025. To this end, the Council adopted goals in five key categories: climate, toxics, waste, water, and habitat, as well as a Sustainability Plan to guide this work.

### Metro's sustainability goals



**Reduce carbon** Reduce direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions to 80 percent below 2008 levels by 2050.



**Choose nontoxic** Eliminate the use or emissions of persistent bioaccumulative toxics (PBTs) and other priority toxic and hazardous substances by 2025.



**Prevent waste** Reduce overall generation of waste, and recycle or compost all remaining waste by 2025.



**Conserve water** Reduce water use to 50 percent below 2008 levels by 2025.



**Enhance habitat** Ensure that Metro's parks, trails, natural areas and developed properties support healthy, functioning ecosystems and watersheds.

Metro's Sustainability Program, housed in the Capital Asset Management department, coordinates implementation of the Sustainability Plan and Integrated Pest Management Plan to achieve these goals. Metro produces an annual report on progress toward these goals; this story is told by data in key indicators and by key accomplishments across the agency. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on operations, Metro did not produce a report FY 21 and FY 22. This report covers key accomplishments from FY 21 to FY 23, and goal indicator data for FY 23.

## KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS



### Metro adopts Sustainable Buildings and Sites Policy

The built environment has a tremendous impact on human health and wellbeing and on the ecosystem functions that sustain life. As a regional employer and host of public buildings and services, Metro strives to ensure that its buildings and sites align with its values and are accessible, welcoming, and healthy places to visit and work. To that end, Metro launched an update to its original Green Building Policy in FY 21.

The new Sustainable Buildings and Sites Policy advances Metro's climate justice, racial equity, and environmental sustainability goals by setting standards for new construction, maintenance, and operations of Metro's buildings and spaces. Key issues addressed include increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy, reducing fossil fuel use, minimizing the urban heat island effect, choosing nontoxic building materials, as well as advancing accessibility, equity in contracting, and meaningful and inclusive community engagement. Initial rollout of the policy in FY 24 has influenced the scope of more than 25 projects across seven departments.

Learn more about the [Sustainable Buildings and Sites Policy](#).

### Climate Justice and Resilience Task Force convenes

In response to direction from the Metro Council, Metro leadership convened a Climate Justice and Resilience Task Force of staff from across the agency to outline an approach for creation of a regional climate justice and resilience strategy. The task force identified values and guiding principles, outlined a climate justice and resilience framework, drafted a work plan, and assessed resources needed to implement the work plan. Task Force members envision greater Portland becoming a leader in reducing carbon pollution and improving livability through principles of justice, collaboration, and equity, while creating new opportunities for those most burdened by climate change. The task force chairs delivered their recommendations to the Metro Council in July 2023, and work is underway to determine next steps.

This body of work dovetails with Metro's administration of a Climate Pollution Reduction Grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to produce a Priority Climate Action Plan and a Comprehensive Climate Action Plan, in partnership with jurisdictions across a seven-county region.

*Rendering: Blue Lake Park, new Operations & Maintenance Building.*

## Clean Air Construction Standard reduces diesel pollution

In July 2020, the Metro Council adopted the [Clean Air Construction Standard](#) to reduce diesel pollution from public construction projects. Diesel pollution can cause significant health issues, including cancer, heart attacks and pre-term births. Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties have some of the highest levels of diesel pollution in the country, and over half of that pollution comes from construction equipment. Data indicates that Black and Latine populations and people with low incomes are exposed to higher levels of diesel pollution due to proximity to sources of pollution. The black carbon in diesel exhaust is also a potent contributor to climate change.

To address these serious health and environmental justice issues, several public agencies in the greater Portland region developed a regional standard that requires that diesel equipment, concrete mixers, and dump trucks used on public construction projects meet engine pollution reduction standards and limit idling. Grants and technical assistance are available to help contractors with compliance. The standard applies to Metro projects over \$500,000 in cost, and is one of Metro's [Public Benefit Programs](#), aimed at ensuring that the funding spent on local public improvements benefits local communities.

## Metro Regional Center earns LEED Gold certification

In June 2023, the Metro Regional Center earned LEED Gold certification, the first existing building within Metro's portfolio to get LEED-certified since the new Sustainable Building and Sites Policy was adopted. Reconfiguring the office environment during the height of the pandemic helped MRC earn LEED points.

Removal of cubicle walls maximized daylight, reduced lighting energy use, and opened up expansive views of Portland. Other sustainability improvements included replacing the HVAC system, swapping lighting with LEDs, choosing green-certified furniture, adjusting outdoor lighting to meet bird-friendly guidelines, adding indoor plant installations, creating a central sustainable office and catering supplies center, and reducing irrigation water use by 60 percent. Indoor air quality tests demonstrated healthy indoor air due to the use of green cleaning products and low-VOC finishes, furniture, and paint, including Metro's own recycled MetroPaint.

Future improvements will include installing electric vehicle charging infrastructure for fleet and employees, retro commissioning the HVAC system for greater efficiency, and exploring community solar on the Irving Street Garage.



*Photo: The Metro Regional Center team at the LEED ceremony.*



### **Parks and Nature electrifies their fleet**

Metro became one of the first government agencies in Oregon to receive the all-electric Ford 150 Lightning in 2022. Metro's 120-vehicle fleet includes more than 40 light-duty trucks, mostly in Parks and Nature. Electrifying these trucks emerged as the best opportunity for emissions reduction due to their high usage and low fuel efficiency.

Working with PGE through the Fleet Partner program, Metro installed electric vehicle infrastructure at the Borland Field Station to charge 20 electric trucks. With six Ford Lightnings purchased in FY 23 and an additional three ordered, Lightnings will comprise approximately 16 percent of the Parks and Nature fleet. With staff servicing parks and natural areas across the region, from Chehalem Ridge Nature Park to Oxbow Regional Park, this investment in electric vehicles and charging infrastructure will reduce greenhouse gas carbon and air pollution from operations. Metro plans to invest in electric vehicle infrastructure across Metro facilities and shift to an all-electric light duty fleet.

*Photo: Parks staff Jonathan Todd charging an F-150 Lightning.*

### **Metro switches to low carbon renewable diesel across operations**

With the increased availability of renewable diesel, Metro has been able to switch from petroleum diesel to this low carbon fuel across most of its operations. In 2020, Metro started using renewable diesel for transporting the region's garbage from Metro's transfer stations to the Columbia Ridge landfill in Arlington and has been able to use renewable diesel for most of the time since then. Given that transporting the region's garbage uses about a million gallons of fuel annually, switching to low carbon renewable diesel has significantly reduced Metro's carbon footprint.

Since that time, Metro has also transitioned to renewable diesel at Metro's waste transfer stations, parks, and at the Oregon Zoo. The renewable diesel purchased by Metro is made from agricultural waste streams with no crops grown to produce the fuel. In addition to the climate benefits, switching to renewable diesel also improves public health by reducing nitrogen oxide, carbon monoxide, and diesel particulate matter emissions.

## Metro helps curb impacts from invasive species in the region

Two new native tree-destroying insects have found their way to greater Portland in recent years. Metro's Integrated Pest Management Program and Parks and Nature department have been partnering with multiple stakeholders to slow the spread of the emerald ash borer and the Mediterranean oak borer. The EAB was first discovered in Forest Grove in 2022. Metro's partnership with the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Forestry, Clean Water Services, and other agencies to use biological controls, tree removal, and other methods in Metro's natural areas have been instrumental at slowing the spread of the insect.

The Mediterranean oak borer is a brown beetle about the size of pencil lead that has made its way into North America. Their only known host is the native Oregon White oak. The beetle tunnels into thin-barked areas or cracks on branches or freshly cut firewood, carrying fungi which can eventually kill the oaks. Current efforts are focused on monitoring active infestations and testing the effectiveness of various management strategies. Metro has had multiple social media campaigns related to these invasive insects, focusing on the importance of not moving firewood to halt the spread.



## OCC partnership with Bold Reuse to reduce disposable service ware

The Oregon Convention Center once again demonstrated its forward-thinking approach to sustainability by partnering with Bold Reuse, a local women-owned business, to reduce the use of disposable service ware. This pilot program replaced single use food ware with durable trays and plates at several restaurants and cafes during a variety of events. The results were encouraging – customers and staff liked the program, and most of the trays and plates made it back to the collection tubs.

Bold Reuse, located just a half a mile from the convention center, picked up the trays and plates after the events, took them back to their facility to wash and sanitize them, and returned them for the next round of meals. The convention center was one of the first in the nation to embrace such a program and continues to pursue opportunities to reduce single use service ware. Other sustainability initiatives in food and beverage services at Metro's venues include eliminating the sale of single use beverage bottles, reducing food waste, offering plant-based menu items, and responsible purchasing.

Photos: left – emerald ash borer.  
right – reusable service ware at OCC.

## Zoo Polar Passage and Primate Forest habitats certified LEED



Polar Passage and Primate Forest, two new exhibits that opened at the Oregon Zoo in FY 21, received LEED Silver certification for New Construction. Key sustainability features include:

- Pool filtration system that reduces utility water use by almost 16 million gallons annually
- A connection to an underground geothermal loop to redirect heat generated from chilling the saltwater pools at Polar Passage to warm the nearby elephant barn
- Bird friendly glazing that prevents bird strikes and outdoor lighting that reduces light pollution
- Roof canopies made from cross laminated timber sourced from sustainably managed forests that store carbon and reduce embodied energy
- Reflective paving at Polar Plaza that reduces the urban heat island effect
- Lower-emitting materials that protect indoor air quality
- Robust energy and water metering and monitoring systems

*Photo: Cross-laminated timber canopy at the Oregon Zoo.*

## Other key accomplishments

### Agency-wide

- Subscribed to community solar to support equitable access to renewable energy
- Rolled out a sustainable catering toolkit
- Updated the chemical product inventory and online safety data sheet system
- Added battery electric landscaping equipment at several facilities

### Metro Regional Center

- Launched Sustainable Office Center to reduce impacts from office supplies
- Reduced landscaping water use by 60 percent by improving irrigation systems
- Purchased four e-bikes for fleet, an electric cart, and an electric forklift

### Oregon Convention Center

- Participated in multi-state pilot to reduce catered event food waste at large venues
- Installed “smart” watering system to reduce water use for irrigation
- Implemented LED lighting retrofits

### Portland Expo Center

- Installed high efficiency air conditioning unit
- Launched honeybee project to call attention to the role of honeybees in food production
- Installed “smart” watering system for stormwater green wall to reduce water use

### Oregon Zoo

- Repurposed bathroom stall dividers from renovation project for animal exhibits
- Green team initiated sustainable purchasing for staff t-shirt and gloves

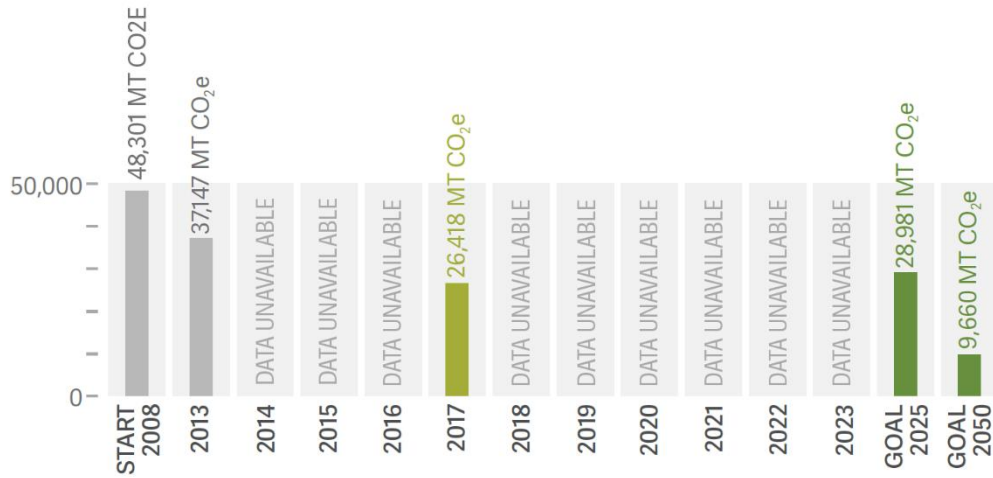
### WPES

- Recycled 22 tons of landfill pipe, saving 361 barrels of oil and 130,434 kWh of electricity

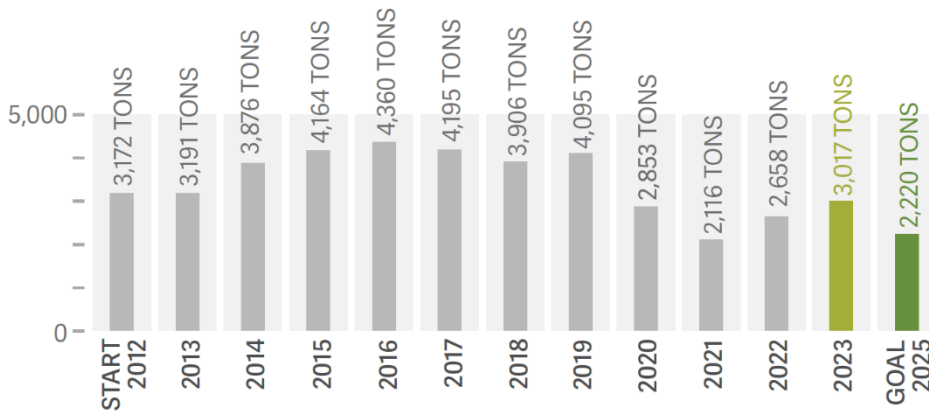
### Parks & Nature

- Acquired natural area land, contributing to climate change mitigation and resilience
- Removed impervious surface through demolition and stormwater improvements

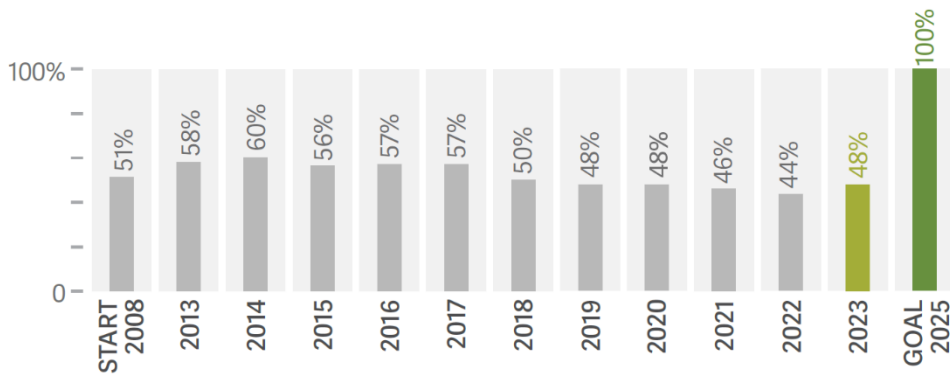
# SUSTAINABILITY SCORECARD



## GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

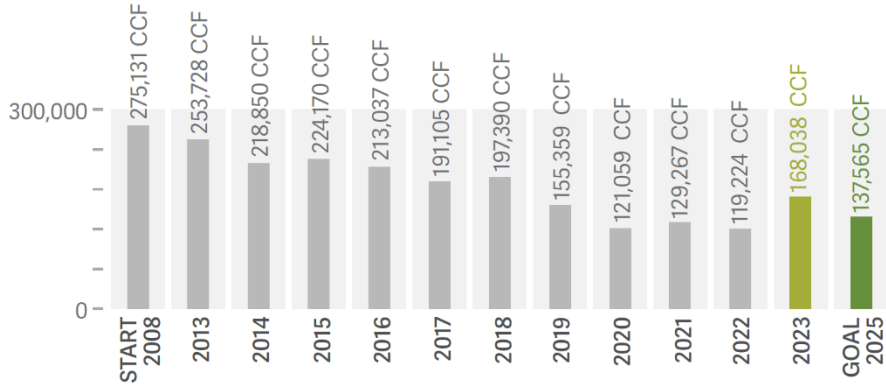


## WASTE GENERATION

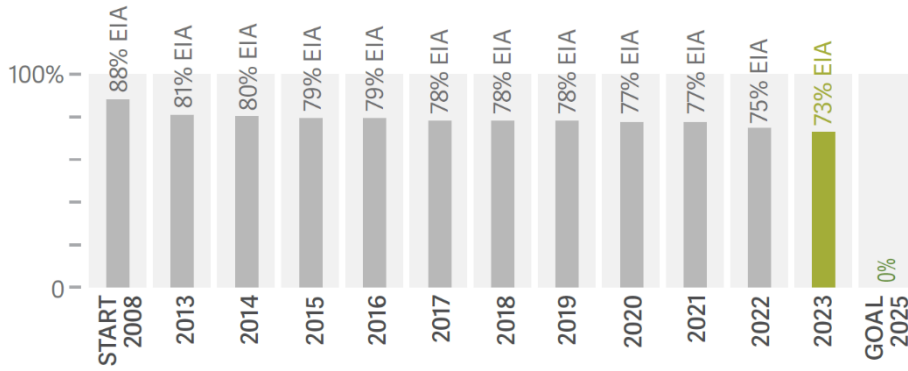


## RECYCLING RATE

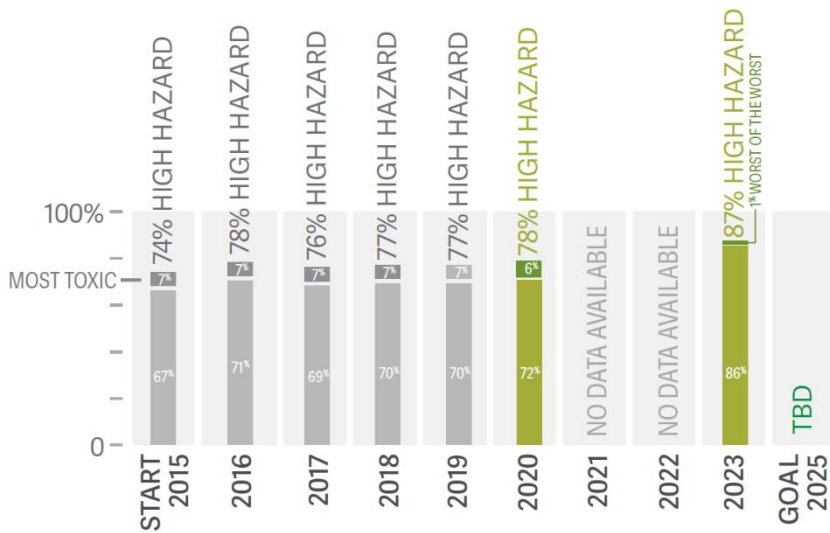




## WATER CONSUMPTION

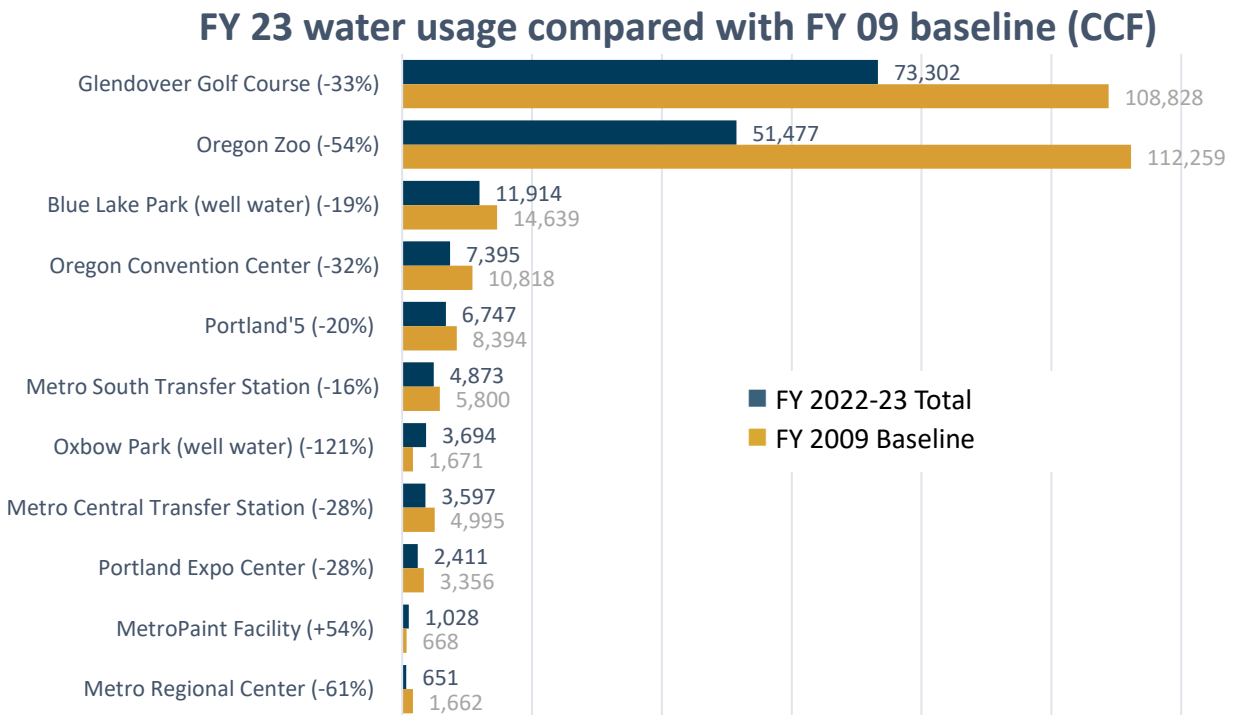
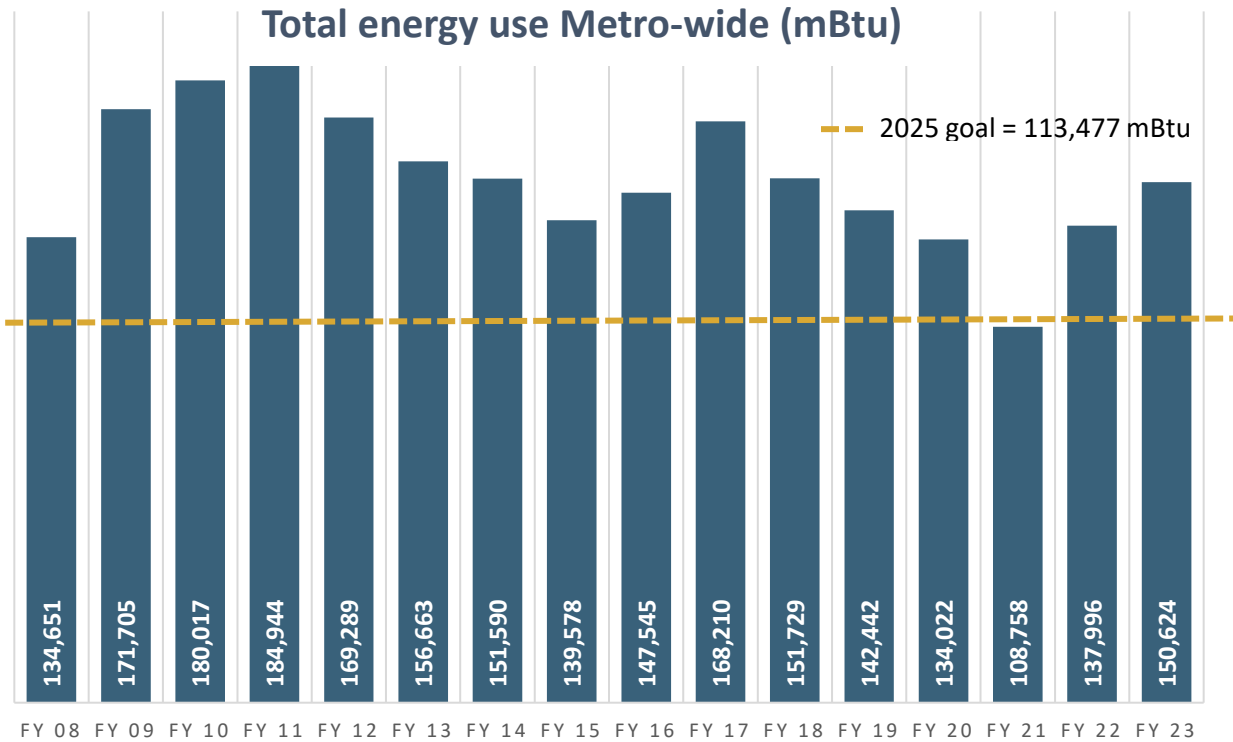


## EFFECTIVE IMPERVIOUS AREA



## TOXIC INVENTORY

# DATA HIGHLIGHTS



## LOOKING AHEAD

The progress shared in this report results from the vision and leadership of the Metro Council and the commitment and ingenuity of staff across the agency. This report highlights just a portion of the work done over FY 21-FY 23 to advance progress toward Metro's internal sustainability goals.

### Since the close of FY 23, Metro has:

- Applied the Sustainable Buildings and Sites Policy to capital projects
- Switched to 100 percent renewable electricity across all facilities
- Developed a fleet decarbonization plan and an electric-first Fleet Policy
- Invested in electric vehicle infrastructure and EVs
- Refined Metro's Toxic Assessment Tool to inform purchasing
- Developed sustainability goals and targets for the Zoo Campus Plan
- Implemented sustainability initiatives in food and beverage services at its visitor venues

Metro will continue to drive integration of sustainability, climate justice, and resilience into its policies, capital investments, and operations. Metro's original Sustainability Plan sunsets in 2025, and Metro is developing a new plan to reflect the agency's strategic priorities, current best practices, and the most impactful opportunities across its operations.

## METRO SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM

### Sustainability Program Team

- Jenna Garmon, Sustainability Manager
- Rob Hamrick, Integrated Pest Management Program Manager
- Dana Visse, Climate Analyst
- Sarah Allison, Sustainability Planner

### Sustainability Steering Committee

A steering committee representing Metro's facilities, visitor venues, and key departments provides oversight and accountability for implementation of the Metro Sustainability Plan. FY 23 committee members included:

- Tim McCormack and Chris Sun, Oregon Zoo
- Matthew Uchtman and Nancy Reimer, Oregon Convention Center

- Chuck Dills and Darryl Jones, Portland Expo Center
- Rory Greenfield and Heidi Timm, Metro Regional Center
- Melissa Bergstrom and Nicole Lewis, Parks and Nature
- Chris McNeil, Waste Prevention and Environmental Services
- Ed Williams, Portland's Centers for the Arts
- Nancy Strening and Sebrina Nelson, Construction Project Management Office
- Matt DeNinno and Jon Deveaux, Finance and Regulatory Services - Procurement
- Ashley Sloan, Finance and Regulatory Services - Finance

Learn more about Metro's internal sustainability program at:

[oregonmetro.gov/greenmetro](https://oregonmetro.gov/greenmetro)

If you picnic at Blue Lake or take your kids to the Oregon Zoo, enjoy symphonies at the Schnitz or auto shows at the convention center, put out your trash or drive your car – we’ve already crossed paths.

**So, hello. We’re Metro – nice to meet you.**

In a metropolitan area as big as Portland, we can do a lot of things better together. Join us to help the region prepare for a happy, healthy future.

**Stay in touch with news, stories and things to do.**

[oregonmetro.gov/news](http://oregonmetro.gov/news)

**Follow oregonmetro**



**Metro Council President**

Lynn Peterson

**Metro Councilors**

Ashton Simpson, District 1

Christine Lewis, District 2

Gerritt Rosenthal, District 3

Juan Carlos González, District 4

Mary Nolan, District 5

Duncan Hwang, District 6

**Auditor**

Brian Evans

600 NE Grand Ave.

Portland, OR 97232-2736

503-797-1700