



Green Buildings Now: A project description

Our mission

Green Buildings Now is working for a just transition to a fossil-fuel-free Seattle by partnering with leaders of historically marginalized communities, funding the installation of non-polluting electric energy systems in buildings, and raising awareness of the need to end the use of gas and oil in all homes and commercial buildings.

The concept

A number of faith congregations and climate justice groups have come together to address the twin moral imperatives of addressing the climate emergency and promoting environmental justice. This initiative, known as **Green Buildings Now**, has created a fund that is helping marginalized communities replace fossil fuel building energy systems with clean electric systems.

Energy use in homes and other buildings is responsible for a significant portion of greenhouse gas emissions in Seattle — emissions the City Council has pledged to eliminate by 2030. However, the transition to clean buildings is taking place at a pace insufficient to meet the zero-emission goal even by mid-century.

Many citizens are unaware of the need to decarbonize, and the cost of installing electric devices such as heat pumps is beyond the reach of many building owners. Communities historically disadvantaged by racial and economic injustice are particularly at risk of being left behind and missing out on the benefits of clean electric energy.

The **Green Buildings Now** fund will help residents of lower-income communities take part in the transition to clean energy. Our initial commitment for this fund is to pay for building weatherization and installation of clean electric energy systems at the South Beacon Hill Resilience Hub pilot project located on the campus of Bethany United Church of Christ. These energy systems may include heat pumps, heat pump water heaters and induction stoves.

We asked frontline community leaders what they need most to transition to clean energy, and the project we are proposing is what they asked for. Building improvements will benefit the tens of thousands of Beacon Hill residents who use the site for a variety of services and activities. In the event of a disaster, the electric devices we fund will work in concert with the planned solar power array and battery power storage.

Who we are

Green Buildings Now was initially proposed in a different form by Interfaith Climate Action - First Hill, a collaboration between Bet Alef Meditative Synagogue and Seattle First Baptist Church. Partners in building the fund include Bet Alef Meditative Synagogue, Faith Action Climate Team, the Prospect Congregational United Church of Christ Social & Environmental Justice Ministry Team, Seattle First Baptist Church, the South Seattle Climate Action Network, and the University Unitarian Church Climate Action Team. We thank Treeline Foundation for its generous support.

Seattle First Baptist Church has created a dedicated account to receive contributions to ***Green Buildings Now*** and to write checks for building decarbonization and weatherization.

We welcome additional civic groups, faith congregations and environmental organizations to become partners.

The South Beacon Hill Resilience Hub

The proposal for a South Beacon Hill Resilience Hub is a collaboration between Bethany United Church of Christ and Got Green, an environmental, racial, and economic justice advocacy group led by people of color and low income people. Bethany UCC has received a Seattle City Light Green Up grant to create a solar-power array which, with along with battery power storage, will provide electric power to the Resilience Hub and will allow services to be provided to Beacon Hill residents during an emergency. The solar-and-storage project is being developed with the assistance of Spark Northwest, a nonprofit dedicated to development of locally controlled clean energy sources.

Got Green and Bethany UCC have set a goal of removing fossil fuels from the multi-building Bethany campus within three years. ***Green Buildings Now*** has committed to supporting electrification and weatherization of the Resilience Hub. We do not know yet which devices will be replaced first, and we do not yet have a timetable for the work. A key part of Bethany UCC's decarbonization goal is to replace the inefficient oil furnace in the sanctuary building with a heat pump or other clean technology. Other buildings in the Resilience Hub also will need decarbonization of their heating, water heating and cooking systems. An energy audit will outline the work required to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions and reduce utility bills.

The ***Green Buildings Now*** partners initially envisioned a fund focused on helping homeowners finance purchase of heat pumps or heat pump water heaters, with a focus on economic and racial justice. During meetings with representatives of Got Green, Bethany UCC, Spark Northwest, the Beacon Hill Council and El Centro de la

Raza, these community leaders asked us to redirect our limited decarbonization dollars from homes to the Resilience Hub in order to benefit more people.

While **Green Buildings Now** may choose to assist homeowners in some way in the future, our effort at this point is focused on the South Beacon Hill Resilience Hub. We believe this is the best way to achieve our goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions while also supporting the grassroots leadership in a community of color.

Got Green hopes to create a number of climate resilience hubs, which can provide space for growing food, health services, housing, jobs and job training in good times — and can provide shelter, food, communications, warmth and safety during emergencies, along with cooling in extreme heat. The Bethany UCC campus at South Graham Street and Beacon Avenue South already serves as a de facto resilience hub. Nonprofit organizations either located on campus or providing services there include Refugee Women’s Alliance, Rainier Valley Food Bank, Youth Undoing Institutional Racism, Black Power Epicenter Cooperative, Rainier Valley Cooperative Preschool, Nurturing Roots Farm, and Got Green.

Architects of the South Beacon Resilience Hub espouse a vision of “climate resilience” that entails community education about climate change, a network of resilience hubs, and nurturing a core of working-class climate leaders of color. “For us,” they write, “‘Resilience’ means that the community has what it needs to make it through times of crisis, and ‘weather the storm.’” According to dialogues Got Green has had with community members over the last 5 years, climate resilience includes food security, a social safety net that provides services and resources for and by the community, and healthy housing that keeps them rooted in place.”

Becoming a partner

The more partners who become part of **Green Buildings Now**, the more buildings we can upgrade and the more we will be able to educate the community on the need to replace the oil and gas appliances in our homes and other buildings.

We invite your organization to become a *Green Buildings Now* partner. Partners agree to be publicly identified as such and are expected to encourage their members to contribute to the fund. As a partner, we would urge you to schedule a Green Buildings Now presentation; include project information and a greenbuildingsnow.org link (coming soon) in your bulletins, newsletters and website; and consider making a direct donation or grant.

Seattle First Baptist Church has agreed to hold donations in a separate account. Donations to **Green Buildings Now** [may be made online](#) or with a check payable to Seattle First Baptist Church (Memo: Green Buildings Now), Attn: Darren Hochstedler, 1111 Harvard Ave., Seattle, WA 98122. A **Green Buildings Now** website is under construction.

For more information and to explore partnership, contact Keith Ervin (keithervin@msn.com), 206-371-3834) or Linda Zaugg (thezaugg@icloud.com), 206-322-8652).