

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 for the purpose of creating a fund to help facilitate a just transition of buildings in Seattle from climate-damaging fossil fuel energy systems to non-polluting electric systems.

We are taking this step because of the moral imperative of addressing the climate crisis in our own community. 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.

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.

To address this urgent problem, **Green Buildings Now** has created a fund that 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 installation of non-polluting heating, cooling and water heating appliances for the South Beacon Hill Resilience Hub pilot project located on the campus of Bethany United Church of Christ.

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. We will help 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. At this writing, several organizations have become partners in building the fund: Faith Action Climate Team, Seattle First Baptist Church, South Seattle Climate Action Network and University Unitarian Church. Other organizations we are in discussion with include University Congregational United Church of Christ and St. James Cathedral.

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

Seattle First Baptist Church has agreed to receive contributions to the green buildings fund and write checks to pay for installation of non-polluting electric devices.

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 applied for a Seattle City Light Green Up grant to create a solar-power array which, with battery power storage, would provide all of the power to the Resilience Hub and would 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 the next three years. We have committed to use our green buildings fund to help electrify 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. Our Beacon Hill partners are beginning to inventory the devices that require replacement in order to achieve their zero-emissions goal. They have assured us the scope of work we fund can be tailored to match the amount of money we are able to raise.

Our initial vision for a green buildings fund focused on helping homeowners finance purchase of heat pumps or heat pump water heaters. We also aimed to direct our assistance as much as possible to low-income residents, and we hoped to partner with grassroots community groups. 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.

Bethany UCC and Got Green intend to create several 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 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 ask that partner organizations agree to be publicly identified as partners and that they invite members of their community to contribute to the green buildings fund.

Although we anticipate that most contributions in this first year will come from individuals, we ask partner organizations to consider whether they might make a financial contribution as well. We encourage members of partner organizations to attend meetings of the green buildings fund organizing committee. The committee currently meets by Zoom on the first and third Fridays of the month at 9:30 a.m.

Donations to **Green Buildings Now** may be made to Seattle First Baptist Church (Memo: Green Buildings Now), Attn: Darren Hochstedler, 1111 Harvard Ave., Seattle, WA 98122. A website and online donation portal will be created in the near future.

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).