

# COVID Recovery and Climate Action

Briefing for Thurston County Commissioners  
July 22, 2020



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Thank you Commissioners, for your service and leadership during this difficult time. Your job is difficult, takes patience and perseverance. Thank you for considering how our community response to the COVID19 pandemic and the Climate Crisis, taken together, could lead to a healthy prosperous future for Thurston County and the planet.



## Today's Discussion



- Case for a Clean Energy Recovery
- Budget: Seed Funding to Prepare and Position
- Advocate for Economic Recovery Stimulus \$



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Preview of what we want to cover today: Clean energy recovery offers health, jobs, business, climate benefits. Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan forthcoming - many actions that could benefit economy, equity, strong multiplier effects. Budget request: plan now to position for future for recovery stimulus. We have power locally to lead state and region to call for economic recovery, learn from 2008 "great recession" recovery - healthy, energy efficient homes; renewable energy more important than ever



# The Case for a Clean Energy Recovery

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## COVID and Climate Change



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COVID has shown the vulnerability of our current health, food, and economic structures. Climate change will lead to more virulent diseases, wildfires, crop failures, loss of biodiversity. Both crises require that we not go back to business as usual.



## Impact on Low Income, POC



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Climate change affects poor people and people of color first and worst. Nationally, poor people, blacks, latinx are dying from COVID at a higher rate. Between 2014 and 2018, the average poverty rate in Thurston County was about 11%. In 2018, 36% of housing units were rentals. For the 2012-2016 5-year average, **37%** of Thurston County households were either **cost burdened or severely cost burdened, representing more than 38,000 households**. We can expect this number has increased dramatically during the pandemic.



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## Cost of Failing to Stem Climate Breakdown



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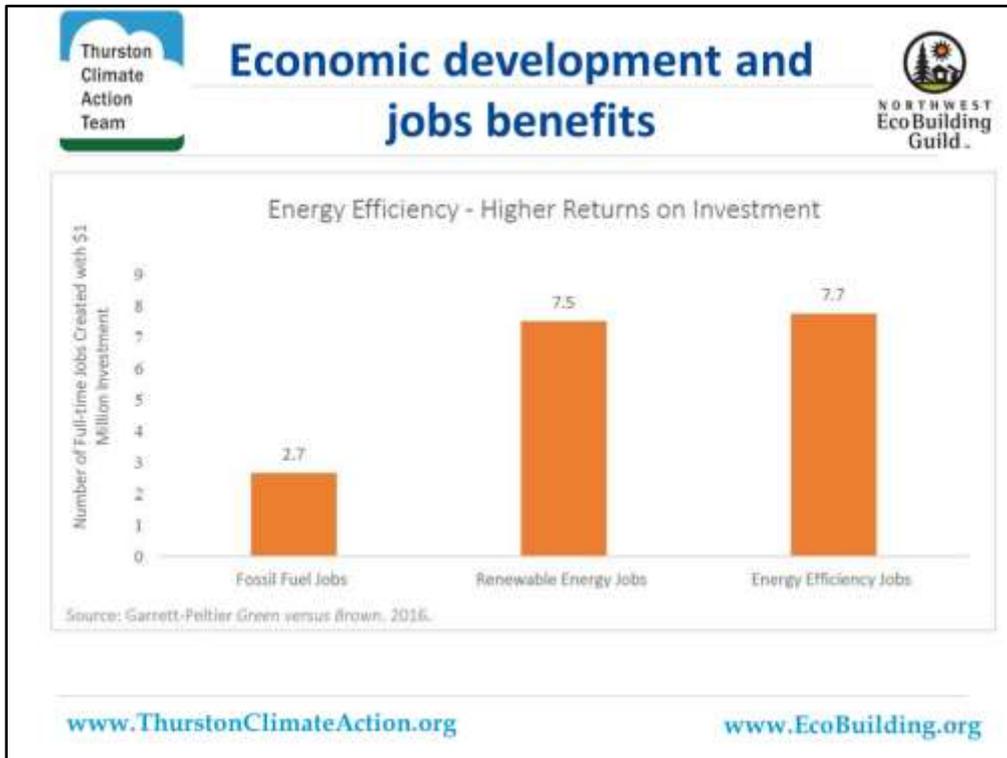
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Recent local studies show that there will be significant health and economic impacts from climate disruption if it is not addressed quickly. These include heat waves, wildfires, damage to shellfish due to ocean acidification, floods, landslides and sea level rise. Wildfire smoke and mold compound health risk for those who have lung damage due to COVID 19.

According to a recent paper by the National Bureau of Economic Research, climate change could cost US economy 10.5% of gross domestic product by 2100.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2019/08/19/climate-change-could-cost-us-up-percent-its-gdp-by-study-finds/>. In 2018 the GDP for Thurston County was \$14Bn, according to government figures (Bureau of Economic Analysis). That means the cost to the Thurston County economy could be about \$1.5Bn. (These are annual figures.)



Energy efficiency investments create more net jobs (direct, indirect and induced) than average, and many more than investment in fossil fuel industry. For example, a \$15M investment in energy efficiency creates 45 net new jobs the first year, and 20 net new jobs each year for the next 20 years. (Source: “How Does Energy Efficiency Create Jobs?”, fact sheet by the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy.) According to a September 2019 study: “For the second year in a row, America’s energy efficiency businesses led the nation’s energy economy in creating jobs—accounting for about half (76,000) of the sector’s entire job growth in 2018 (151,700). Energy efficiency employs more Americans than the entire fossil fuel industry in 41 states and the District of Columbia, and twice as many nationwide. “ Environmental Engineers (E2) and E4TheFuture, “Energy Efficiency Jobs in America 2019.” This is a big opportunity for job creation in Thurston County. The picture is similar for clean (renewable) energy jobs. According to a recent article in Forbes, “Of the 6.8 million energy sector jobs, about half of those, 3.4 million, are in clean energy, according to the March 2020 U.S. Energy and Employment Report, and it lost 1.3 million jobs – or 13% — in a few months. ” See the above chart for the direct jobs created by investment in clean energy.



“The air and water pollution emitted by coal and natural gas plants is linked with breathing problems, neurological damage, heart attacks, cancer, premature death, and a host of other serious problems.” Union of Concerned Scientists, “Benefits of Renewable Energy Use,” 2017. “...one Harvard University study estimated the life cycle costs and public health effects of coal to be an estimated **\$74.6 billion every year.**” Ibid. “.... both coal mining and natural gas drilling can pollute sources of drinking water, and all thermal power plants, including those powered by coal, gas, and oil, withdraw and consume water for cooling.” Ibid (same paper). Locally, energy efficiency makes our homes and businesses more comfortable, producing fewer cases of asthma and stroke. Less gasoline burned helps our breathing and reduces risk of heart problems. Fosters energy independence and resilience during disasters.



## Leveraging Stimulus Funds



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This is a big opportunity for job creation in Thurston County. Any economic development projects, especially those possible using new state and federal dollars, should include a heavy dose of energy efficiency activity to get the most bang for the buck.



## Federal Stimulus Examples



### 2008

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)



- Community Energy Efficiency Block Grant: \$3.2B
- Thurston Energy: EE services 2008-2012 (\$1.5M)

### 2020 Proposed:

House "HEROES Act": \$10B for clean energy

House "Moving Forward Act": \$1.5T for transportation & energy infrastructure

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When we first started this conversation, we led by encouraging you to consider using future stimulus dollars to implement the Climate plan. Now we've narrowed in on a more specific request to help us prepare and position Thurston County for success. Before getting to that, consider what a future stimulus might look like. E.g. 2008 ARRA funding through Dept. of Commerce block grant. Thurston Energy started by TCAT, housed by EDC 2008-2012, created businesses, jobs still thriving today. E.g. Echo Energy, LLC, started 2010, hundreds of energy audits, home energy and health retrofits, 9 employees. Now another economic upheaval, recession looming likely to make 2008 seem mild. Thurston Energy is no longer operating, but assets retained by TCAT. In 2020: So far federal response focused on health and emergency services response. While not passed, likely to see federal stimulus for economic recovery within a year. E.g. HEROES Act, Moving Forward. What can we learn from previous experience? It made a difference, could have done more. We believe 3 things should be done: 1) Community wide energy efficiency program focused on rentals, low-income homes; 2) Expand benefits of renewable energy - solar - to low-income; 3) Transportation services to electrify our transportation system, provide more options



## Budget Request



**Request: Seed funding as soon as available for countywide energy efficiency program: \$150,000**

To prepare and position for federal funds later

TCMP Highest Priority Items, First Year Implementation  
Rough Estimate (2021):

*\$1.2 million divided among 4 jurisdictions*

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We know you are considering funding needs and resources for TCMP, 2021 budget, and that COVID shutdown is going to impact local government with revenue shortfalls, which will constrain our ability to implement TCMP. If we act now, before the end of the year, we could put Thurston County in a better position to receive federal and state support in 2021. We are asking you to call on neighboring jurisdictions, join together, commit seed funding to create a countywide energy efficiency program. A county-wide shared commitment of \$150,000 as soon as possible is needed for this initiative. This might be comparable to how Thurston County acted early to build capacity during the early days Salmon Recovery plans, positioned for success, and was competitive for Salmon Recovery \$ as a result. This is part of the \$1.2M TCAT estimates is needed for the highest priority items during first year TCMP implementation. Of course, the actual amount will be determined by you and your staff. How much of that could come from federal / state grants if we prepare now? NOTE: Thurston County less impacted by sales tax revenue shortfall than other jurisdictions.

Back of the napkin estimate - first year ramp up investment - much more in the long term. This the minimum amount we think all four jurisdictions should commit in 2021. , just a number to use as a placeholder.

Included - consider So we can prepare



## Budget Request



### **\$150,000 Seed to Launch Efficiency Program**

1st Year: Staff, Marketing, Administrative

Establish Vision for program

Build Capacity, Infrastructure for Services

Build Partnerships

Seek additional funding

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With a \$150,000 commitment before the end of the year, Thurston County could launch new community-wide energy efficiency program, to be “shovel-ready” by early 2021. Funds would be used for Staff, to establish the program’s vision, focus and administrative processes. Build basic organizational capacity, as well as infrastructure to deliver services. Another big focus would be to build partnerships with local housing agencies and remodelers / builders / contractors, who are on the front lines of delivering energy efficiency services. Start now, work together on how to prioritize and reach most vulnerable folks in the community Then leverage funds to spur market adoption, access to financing. Partner with local financial institutions on developing climate-friendly lending products. Some funds for marketing - branding, messaging, materials, website, social media. Staff would also help advocate for federal stimulus \$ and apply for grants, seek other support to grow and sustain the program.



**Toward a Clean Energy Future**



# Countywide Energy Efficiency Program: Coordination and Services

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**Energy Efficiency Program Vision**

- Deliver Services with Partners
- Leverage Funding, Incentives & Services for Energy Upgrades, Heat pumps
- Monitor Key Metrics
- Policy Innovation
- Education and Advocacy

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While this needs to be fleshed out once launched, here's our initial idea of what EE program would look like once established and fully funded.

- Early Action (Stage 1): Partner with existing affordable housing agencies on the frontlines of housing our most vulnerable.
- Coordinated effort to upgrade single family, multifamily rental properties managed by those agencies.
- Work through TC-PHSS Healthy Homes program, Thurston Thrives Rental Housing Workgroup, Housing Action Team
- Stage 2: Leverage private financing, incentives, policy to ramp up retrofits of private homes/multifamily, low- to middle-income focus
- Conversion to electric heat pumps (ductless heat pumps, larger ducted systems for mf), away from gas and electric resistance (baseboard) heating
- Support/subsidize energy audits, recommend retrofit measures, connect with contractors
- Measure, monitor, evaluate, adapt, innovate
- Innovate with policy: Example: future mandate for required energy upgrade at time of sale or renovation, with incentives now for early adopters
- Community-wide education, advocacy, coordination with jurisdiction staff



## Clean Energy Health Benefits



### Dealing with Mold as a Tenant

*An online workshop for tenants in Thurston County*

Monday July 27, 2020

5:00 - 6:30 p.m.

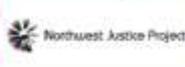
Register today! [tcvls.org/workshops](https://tcvls.org/workshops)

This workshop will cover how to prevent, identify and address mold in your rental home.

**Presenters:**

Carrie Graf, Northwest Justice Project

Elisa Sparkman, Thurston County Healthy Homes Program



Co-sponsored by Thurston County Volunteer Legal Services, Washington Community Action Network, Northwest Justice Project and the Healthy Homes Program of Thurston County Public Health & Social Services.

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For example, here is the good work already being done with the tools already available. Healthy Homes, Thurston Thrives: Scale this up.



## Toward a Clean Energy Future



### Energy Efficiency Program Focus

Rental Properties

Low-income Housing

Middle-Income: Rebates and  
Financing



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Can't overstate how low-income, people of color in our community already suffer the most from unhealthy, uncomfortable, unaffordable housing and energy bills - and from climate change health-related impacts. Disparity will only increase if we don't take proactive measures to reverse the trend, build resilience in affected community. Focus of this program should put equity first, focus on rental properties (over 50% of renters are cost-burdened), low-income households, affordable housing properties. For those more fortunate and able to invest, use incentives and rebates, access to financing to induce them to help themselves: investment that pays for itself, pays dividends from savings, comfort, health, asset value. Cost of retrofitting for everyone is beyond the capacity of local government to pay for, but for many folks the private sector can do it if we send them the right signals. Those who have poor credit, low-wage jobs, don't own their own home, need more help. Our ability to deliver that help will depend on how "shovel ready" we are when federal funds become available.




# Toward a Clean Energy Future






**Clean Energy Services: Focus**

- Community Solar Grants to Low-income households
- Solar on Affordable Housing
- “Solarize” & Group Purchasing
- Education and Advocacy

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In addition to energy efficiency, TC should position climate actions from the TCMP re: solar energy to help lead our COVID Economic Recovery - expand community solar, group purchasing, Solsmart program. Solar is now cheaper than fossil fuels, and it’s much easier to deploy new production capacity than new fossil energy production. Fracked gas is the fastest-growing source of carbon pollution in Washington, and as we convert to all electric homes, it will become the most expensive. We need more on-site and off-site commercial scale solar now to replace fuel sources. The more energy we produce locally, the less we depend on PSE, gas, coal and oil from outside. The leads to energy independence, and resilience during future emergency situations. Olympia Community Solar is already taking the lead on this, they would be the best to ask what it would take to scale this up. We imagine:

- 4 new “hummingbird project” scale installations (100MW ea.) in the next 3 years, 50% cost share from government with equal number of virtual net-metering shares assigned to low-income residents eligible for energy assistance.
- Solar on affordable housing (eliminate residents’ and owners’ energy bills)
- Hire staff to evaluate, develop, coordinate programs for group purchasing, neighborhood-scale solarize campaigns
- As with energy efficiency, support education and advocacy. Olympia Community Solar helped write and pass HB 2248 the Community Solar Access and Equity Act of 2020.
- This work is in addition to the request for \$150,000 for EE program



**Toward a Clean Energy Future**



# Transportation Coordination and Infrastructure Services

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We'd now like to turn our attention to multi modal transportation services focused on reducing GHG emission.



## Toward a Clean Energy Future



### Transportation Advisory Service

Transportation “audits”

Advise individuals, companies on transportation options

Make solutions affordable for all

- Incentives and low-interest loans for EV purchase



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This service is not included in the request for \$150,000 for an EE program. This would be a transportation-focused service, similar to building-focused energy efficiency service discussed earlier. Transportation audits would help households and businesses identify current costs and risks related to transportation (including hidden costs). The service would then help uncover alternative solutions, and help families and businesses connect with vendors and services that could better meet their needs. Can help connect folks with incentives, group purchasing programs, dealer specials, and low interest loans available from credit unions and banks.



## Toward a Clean Energy Future



### Transportation Coordination

Coordinate with other agencies

Monitor key metrics

Education and advocacy

- EV charging stations
- Vehicle and ride sharing
- Transit
- Policies and incentives



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This would provide focus and coordination for clean transportation programs and projects that currently does not exist within Thurston County. Starting with coordination with all agencies leading and concerned with transportation services, it would also provide monitoring of metrics (such as EV vehicle purchase and ownership, use of bike trails, ride sharing and telecommuting) which are leading indicators of reduced GHG emissions, along with public education and advocacy to local governments, businesses and the general public.



# Advocating for COVID Clean Energy Recovery Stimulus

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## A Clean Energy Recovery



“A low-carbon recovery could not only initiate the significant emissions reductions needed to halt climate change but also create more jobs and economic growth than a high-carbon recovery would.”

- McKinsey and Company



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Thurston County’s plan for Economic Recovery from COVID should be a Clean Energy Recovery that also create jobs, supports local business, saves residents money on their utility bills, and fosters health and resiliency for our residents and community as a whole. In addition, those solutions can help us avoid the worst impacts of unchecked climate disruption - compounding financial, health and environmental problems. Climate action is our best COVID economic recovery strategy.

Good news: this isn’t just our idea. Thought leaders and elected officials all over the US and globally show the willingness and desire, not to go back to business as usual, but to build a new sustainable low-carbon economy from the ashes of this next Great Recession. This article from McKinsey and Company a global corporate consulting firm sums it up well. There are many more technical resources available once we start down this path. We need to start ASAP.



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## A Clean Energy Recovery



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**Advocacy: Local, State, Federal**

Local Focus on Clean Energy Recovery

Call on Governor to Lead

Urge US Senators, Representatives to Pass Clean Energy Stimulus



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We started off thinking that Thurston Strong was a big player in setting the course of our Economic Recovery. They may be. We heard from Jason Robertson who heads the group:

“I’ll be in touch... Right now, we’re pretty inundated with the “response” part of our “respond, recover, reset” program. We’ve ... discussed turning this moment into an opportunity to put the regional economy on a different trajectory, including some of what you’ve shared here.”

Until then, it will take elected officials of all four jurisdictions to rally together to make this a decisive turning point toward a sustainable, innovative local economy that stays competitive through the crises, and to support our most vulnerable residents along the way, so they (everyone) can contribute to our collective success in the long-term.

Request for action:

- Schedule this topic for a hearing with EDC, Thurston Thrives, Planning, Economic Development and Housing staff, invite Cities.
- Call on Governor to lead conversation nationally
- Lean on Beth Doglio, Denny Heck, Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell and others to make clean energy recovery a centerpiece of HEROES Act, Fwd, or other fed stimulus or infrastructure bill. Offer to testify in Washington DC.



## Today's Request



Allocate \$\$ as soon as possible for County's share of \$150K to launch energy efficiency program

Put clean energy work at the center of future recovery/stimulus projects



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What we are asking from you:

- BOCC Commit 1/3rd to 1/2 of \$150,000 in 2020 expenditures
- Reach out to Olympia, Lacey, Tumwater, TRPC - pony up to finance the rest
- Start turning from emergency response to economic recovery and put climate and clean energy at the center of that.

The worst case scenario - income disparity, people experiencing homelessness grows, respiratory health problems grow, compounding recession, climate change unchecked = unmitigated disaster worsening year by year.

Best case, triple+ win scenario: we create a better economy, reduce wealth and income disparities, clean up our environment, and build our community's resilience to future disasters. Let's choose our path before we lose our last best chance to do so. This is a moment to make history.

We stand ready to support and advocate. Sincerely,



## Connecting with Us



### Our contact info:

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