

The EcoDistricts Initiative

Getting to Next Generation :
Neighborhoods :

The EcoDistricts Initiative is a comprehensive strategy that integrates building and infrastructure projects with community and individual action.

Performance Areas:

- Equitable Development
- Place Making
- Social Cohesion
- Air Quality & Carbon
- Energy
- Access & Mobility
- Water
- Habitat & Ecosystem Function
- Materials Management

An EcoDistrict is a next generation neighborhood that combines livability, green infrastructure and community decision-making.

In 2009, the Portland Sustainability Institute (PoSI), in partnership with the City of Portland, launched the EcoDistricts Initiative as part of the Portland region's broadening commitment to sustainability. The Initiative is a comprehensive strategy to accelerate sustainable neighborhood development in the Portland region.

WHY

For the first time in history, a growing majority of the world's population lives in cities. This concentration of people and resources challenges cities to face aging infrastructure, densification and expansion, new fiscal constraints, new technologies, and changing societal values. Cities need new options to do more with less — they need an expanded toolkit to deliver sustainable solutions.

Given these challenges, there is an opportunity for neighborhoods to make faster progress towards sustainability than efforts spread across an entire city. Neighborhoods provide an optimized scale to implement integrated, high impact sustainability strategies because they concentrate resources, mitigate risk, and maximize impact.



Images courtesy City of Vancouver, Portland State University, Anneliese Sitterly

What are the benefits of the EcoDistricts Initiative?

For Municipalities:

It supports a neighborhood sustainability assessment and investment strategy to help meet broader sustainability policy and economic development goals. EcoDistricts put demonstration projects on the ground, save local money and resources, and stimulate new business development.

For Utilities:

It creates a model for integrated infrastructure planning to guide development of more cost-effective and resilient green infrastructure investments. EcoDistricts provide a mechanism to scale conservation and demand-side management goals by aggregating district-wide projects.

For Developers and Property Owners:

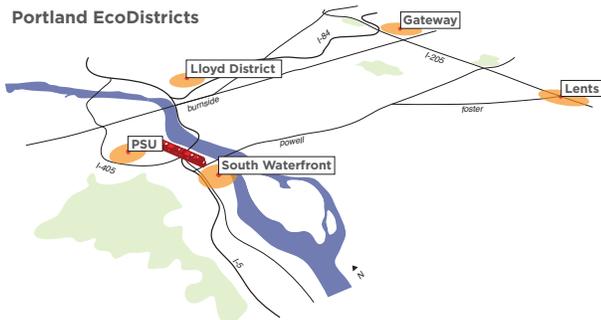
It creates a mechanism to reduce development and operating costs by linking individual building investments to neighborhood infrastructure

For Neighbors:

It provides a tangible way to get involved to improve a neighborhood's economic vitality and sustainability.

For Businesses:

It provides a platform to deliver district-scale infrastructure



HOW

PoSI is working with five pilot districts to guide community engagement, strategic planning and assessment, and catalytic project investments. Over a three-year pilot period, district stakeholders agree to work with their community to set rigorous goals, develop a roadmap, and implement projects. In return, PoSI and its public partners are providing technical and financial resources to support the work.

The EcoDistricts pilot process includes four phases: engagement and governance; integrated assessment; feasibility and project implementation; and ongoing monitoring.

WHAT

The EcoDistricts Initiative looks at sustainable solutions on the scale of a district or neighborhood. System-wide views and integrated thinking across a district help to coordinate action and amplify business opportunity—from professional service firms to manufacturers—and in the process, accomplish more significant sustainable work.

PoSI's work on the Initiative includes the following actions:

- Create a framework and pilot implementation strategy for the City of Portland
- Develop toolkits of strategies and best practices for assessment, engagement and local governance, project financing, and municipal policy adoption
- Provide technical assistance to pilot district stakeholders to conduct assessments and structure local governance
- Assess the viability and benefits of pilot district utilities
- Work with public partners, utilities and pilot district stakeholders to identify key catalytic projects
- Modify municipal policy and streamline regulatory processes to support EcoDistrict implementation
- Develop outreach and training tools to promote the widespread adoption of EcoDistricts
- Identify commercialization opportunities for companies to test promising products and practices

Potential Projects

Buildings:

Net-zero energy, water and waste; energy efficiency retrofits; green roofs; natural ventilation; performance displays; daylighting

Infrastructure:

District energy and water utilities; smart grid; habitat corridors; green streets; pedestrian and bicycle connectivity; transit access

People:

Demand management; bulk purchasing; education; marketing; local governance

To learn more visit www.pdxinstitute.org or contact ecodistricts@pdxinstitute.org