## ****Data, Monitoring, and Participatory Governance: Building Transparency and Community Power****

Effective climate action, urban transformation, and environmental restoration require more than just good intentions—they demand robust systems for data collection, monitoring, evaluation, and decision-making. Too often, the communities most affected by environmental injustice have been excluded from these processes. To change course, we must build a governance model that is transparent, participatory, and centered on the voices of frontline communities.

This section lays out a comprehensive framework to democratize access to information, strengthen community capacity to understand and apply data, and ensure that residents and workers have meaningful decision-making power.

### Core Strategies and Actions

**Build open geospatial data platforms.**  
We will create centralized, publicly accessible geospatial hubs that bring together data on land use, environmental conditions, housing, transportation, and health. These platforms will include:

* Land use and zoning maps
* Urban tree canopy and greenspace inventories
* Air and water quality data
* Brownfield and Superfund site locations
* Housing affordability and displacement risk indicators
* Public transit routes and service data
* Climate vulnerability metrics (heat islands, flood risk zones)

The platforms will use open data standards, machine-readable formats, and user-friendly interfaces, ensuring that residents, researchers, planners, and advocates can easily explore, analyze, and apply the data.

**Develop public dashboards to track progress.**  
Regularly updated public dashboards will report on key indicators tied to the plan’s goals, such as:

* Greenhouse gas emissions reductions
* Land restoration and tree canopy expansion
* Public transit access and service reliability
* Affordable housing production and preservation
* Pollution exposure and proximity to hazards

These dashboards will be spatially detailed, disaggregated by neighborhood and demographic group, and available in multiple languages. Progress will be benchmarked against clear, time-bound targets set at local and national levels.

**Enable participatory GIS and community mapping.**  
We will equip residents, community organizations, and local leaders with the tools, training, and technical support to map their own priorities. Participatory GIS will help document:

* Local environmental concerns
* Culturally significant sites
* Informal greenspaces and gathering places
* Barriers to transit and mobility
* Areas facing displacement or gentrification pressure

By integrating local knowledge into formal planning processes, communities will be able to challenge data blind spots and propose alternative solutions.

**Institutionalize participatory planning and budgeting.**  
Participatory governance will go beyond consultation. We will formalize processes that allow residents, workers, and community groups to co-develop land use plans, set infrastructure priorities, and directly allocate a portion of public funds through participatory budgeting. Community advisory boards and neighborhood assemblies will have binding influence on decisions related to zoning, infrastructure, and environmental restoration.

**Establish public accountability frameworks.**  
Transparency alone is not enough—we need clear, enforceable mechanisms to hold public agencies, contractors, and program implementers accountable. This includes:

* Independent community oversight boards
* Legally mandated transparency requirements
* Accessible online data portals with open downloads
* Regular public reporting and feedback forums
* Formal petition processes to trigger corrective action when goals are unmet

### Why This Matters: Climate Action, Equity, and Public Trust

Transparent, community-centered governance builds public trust, improves environmental outcomes, and strengthens civic engagement. Evidence shows that participatory models like participatory budgeting improve infrastructure equity, while open data initiatives—such as the EPA’s Toxics Release Inventory—empower communities to advocate for environmental improvements.

Yet open data alone is insufficient without the capacity-building and formal mechanisms to embed community input into decision-making. Participatory GIS bridges the gap between institutional knowledge and local experience, helping to democratize both data and power.

By building an integrated system of monitoring, reporting, and participatory governance, we ensure that climate solutions remain on track, respond to community needs, and advance justice.

### Integrated with Broader Policy Goals

This governance framework connects with every other part of the national climate plan:

* Tracking emissions reductions and ecosystem restoration
* Ensuring fair distribution of green infrastructure and public investments
* Strengthening local voice in remediation and transit projects
* Supporting job creation programs with transparent labor and equity metrics

Together, these systems create a foundation for adaptive management, equitable resource allocation, and community-driven solutions.

### Key References

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U.S. EPA Toxics Release Inventory: <https://www.epa.gov/toxics-release-inventory-tri-program>