

Energy Affordability and Communities



By Anahi Segovia Rodriguez

Introduction



Who is Verde?

Verde is located in Northeast Portland's Cully neighborhood. We build environmental wealth by investing in climate resilience and centering frontline communities. Through education, engagement, and advocacy, we strengthen community voices and grow climate leadership

Programs at Verde

- **Home Heating & Cooling:** Low/no-cost upgrades that lower bills and improve home comfort
- **Community Solar:** Affordable clean energy access without rooftop solar
- **Líderes Verdes:** Leadership training for future environmental justice leaders
- **Advocacy:** Community-led policy work for environmental justice



Community Conversation



On June 4, Verde hosted a data center workshop/conversation with Spanish-speaking Latino community members from Cully, Rockwood, and Gresham, Oregon

We began with a simple question: Who knows what a data center is?

Main Takeaways

- Community members are passionate, and want to learn more
- Many wanted to better understand how data centers affect their utility bills and communities
- Utilities are becoming extremely unaffordable
- Participants raised an important question:
 - Why has no one talked to us about this issue before?

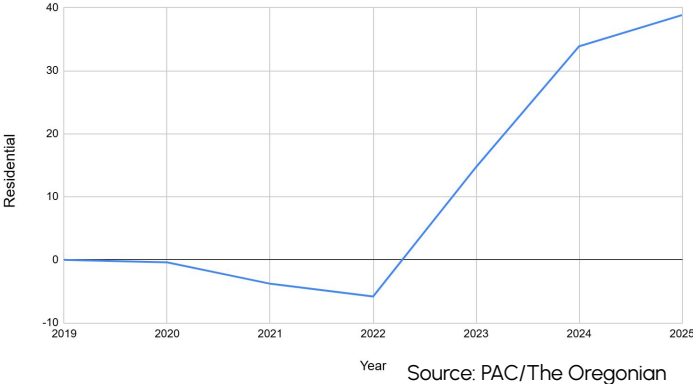


Energy Affordability

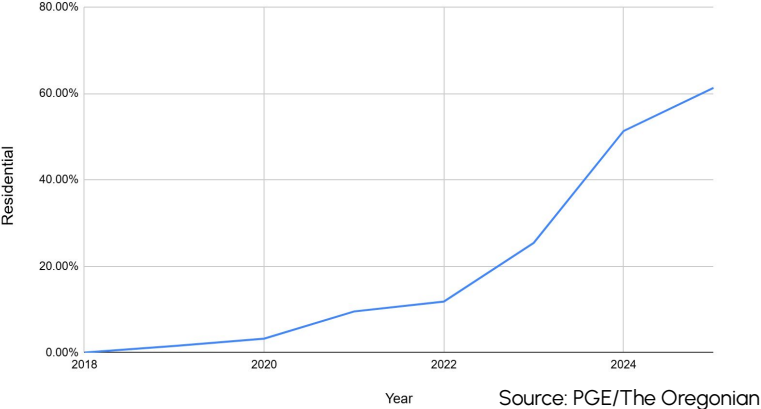


Between 2019 and 2025, rates have gone up more than ~50% for both Pacific Power and Portland General Electric ratepayers.

Pacific Power Cumulative Rate Change - Residential



PGE Cumulative Rate Change - Residential



Energy Affordability Cont.



Here's what we're hearing from community members regarding raising costs...

"From personal experience, I can say that it hasn't been easy to cover all my monthly expenses and bills, especially now with everything that's happening with the food crisis. Sometimes it's not that people don't want to pay, but rather it's the difficult situation that most low-income families are facing."

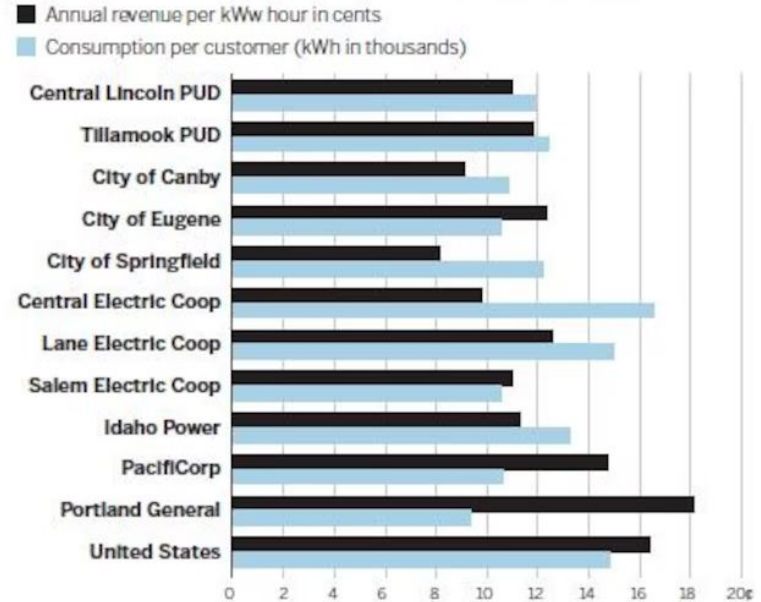
- Rogelia Martinez (Translated from Spanish)

"Even in my own neighborhood which is a middle class neighborhood some neighbors are behind on their utility payments and some have had utilities turned off in the past."

- Ruth Dallas

PGE rates are now greater than national average

Selected electric utilities in Oregon and United States residential averages for 2024



Source: Oregon Public Utility Commission

Disconnections

In 2024, disconnections were at nearly ~70,000
As of 2025, the number was 71,190.

Q1 Disconnection from non-payments			
IOU	Jan '26	Feb '26	March '26
PGE	902	2,395	4,348
PAC	572	497	1,165
		TOTAL	9,839

Source: Oregon Public Utility Commission, RO 16



Picture source: Allison Barr/The Oregonian

Soledad Molina has been a community advocate with Verde and has gone to Salem to give testimony regarding the increasing rates.

Despite all her advocacy, she still has difficulty paying her bills despite being enrolled in PGE's low-income program.

Verde BUILDS Resilience



Through the Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund (PCEF), Verde helps households access heat pumps at low to no cost

- **2024-25:** Verde installed approximately 600 heat pumps for community members
- **2026:** Verde has already installed 210 heat pumps so far

These installations help families lower household energy costs of an estimated average savings of \$370 per year, and some households saving ~\$1,000 annually



Recommendations



One thing is clear, **rates are expected to continue to rise** as data centers continue to be built

Our communities want...

- **To be invited into the conversation earlier.** Community members want more outreach, more education, and a role in decisions that affect their bills
- **More investment in bill-saving solutions,** such as ductless heat pumps, home weatherization, and energy efficiency upgrades that can help lower energy bill
- **Affordability** for residential ratepayers to be the center of the conversations

Citations



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