In its now 31 years, Sightline has never published an annual report. Rather, we publish a Gratitude Report, a testimony of thanks to you, the community of Cascadians numbering in the thousands who carry forward our shared mission of setting a global model. Thanks to you, the year 2023 was arguably Sightline’s most successful. Across the region, from the Cook Inlet to the Klamath River and from the Pacific Coast to the Continental Divide, we together effected changes that will resonate for decades.

Washington took our advice and will begin planning a post-carbon future for its five giant oil refineries. Alaskan leaders defended from repeal their new system of open primaries and ranked choice voting. And in housing, we helped push to adoption reforms that will allow hundreds of thousands of additional Cascadians to find affordable homes in low-carbon neighborhoods, close to work, shops, and parks. These reforms include various combinations—in British Columbia, Montana, Oregon, and Washington, plus Anchorage and Boise—of the legalization of backyard cottages, in-law apartments, duplexes and other “middle housing,” elimination of burdensome parking mandates, and/or taller apartment buildings near transit.

The threats to our climate and democracy remain, of course, and other challenges abound. It’s daunting; of course it is.

But in 2023, we Cascadians turned a corner, I believe, in the quest to build cities for a future beyond carbon. And there’s hope in other domains as well, particularly on democracy this year.

Which is why I began with Mary Oliver’s words: Thanks to your generosity, perhaps we all now live in a “house near the corner.”

Thanks to your generosity, I certainly live—all of us at Sightline live—in gratitude.

Alan Durning, Executive Director
SIGHTLINE INSTITUTE

**“I live in the house near the corner, which I have named Gratitude.” — Mary Oliver**
2023 was a year of unprecedented impact, fueled by your generosity. Together, we celebrated monumental milestones, forging ahead on our mission to make Cascadia into a global model of strong communities, a green economy, and a healthy environment. Your contributions made every achievement listed here possible.

We are proud to have you by our side in this work!

Alaska

In Anchorage, we helped legalize backyard cottages and in-law apartments (accessory dwelling units, or ADUs), contributed to an ordinance to bring more homes to downtown, and initiated building and land use code reforms for triplex and fourplex homes. We joined many other Alaskans in successfully derailing efforts in the legislature to repeal the state’s best-in-the-US model of open primaries and ranked choice voting. By helping Alaskans understand the benefits of electoral reforms, we helped dampen extremism, setting an example for other states.

British Columbia

In British Columbia, our influence helped speed housing reforms that vaulted the province into the lead among all North American jurisdictions for allowing abundant housing in low-carbon neighborhoods: middle housing legalization in all single-family zones, apartments up to 20 stories near transit stations, and the end of excessive off-street parking-space mandates in many urban areas. After years of obstruction, the movement for far more homes in walkable, transit-rich areas across the province finally succeeded.

Idaho

Our efforts in Idaho shaped Boise’s zoning overhaul that loosened restrictions on ADUs and legalized middle housing citywide.

Montana

In 2023, thanks to your generous support, Sightline added Montana to its portfolio to round out the eastern flank of Cascadia. We helped win the “Montana miracle,” a suite of legislation that legalized ADUs and duplexes in most of the state, liberalized housing rules in commercial zones, and reduced parking mandates. Sightline also played a key role in laying the groundwork for electoral reform in the state through citizens’ initiatives and legislative action.

Oregon

In Oregon, our advocacy efforts resulted in the launch of a state oversight system to hold cities accountable and overcome their tendency to block or slow-walk homebuilding by inventing ever more regulatory barriers. We also successfully defended 2022’s statewide parking reforms and helped advance a referendum to the ballot on switching to ranked choice voting for statewide and federal races.

Washington

In Washington, we celebrated landmark victories with the passage of statewide middle housing legalization and ADU reform, among the strongest in the United States. We also helped secure wins on building code reform, permit streamlining, and environmental review for homes in low-carbon neighborhoods, while advancing online voter registration and strengthening automatic voter registration. Finally, Sightline successfully catalyzed a transition planning process for the five Cascadian oil refineries within the state’s boundaries, marking a critical step toward a green energy future.
Sightline Institute in the media:

In 2023, Sightline Institute informed over 500 news articles. From the New York Times to the Seattle Times, the Globe and Mail to The Guardian, OPB to KOMO News, Jacobin and Reason magazines, our research helped shape conversations on key sustainability topics across Cascadia and well beyond.

Visitors to our website, which will undergo a refresh in 2024, viewed an average of more than 40,000 pages per month. Among the most popular were our “cruel musical chairs” video explainer of the housing shortage, a critique of how Election Day maps can misrepresent voters, and a four-point takedown of “renewable natural gas.”

Sightline’s email newsletters continue to grow, counting nearly 29,000 subscriptions by the end of 2023—including the relaunch of our popular “Flashcards” messaging mini-guides. And across Facebook, X, Instagram, and LinkedIn, Sightline had more than 32,000 followers, plus an additional 15,500 to researchers’ individual X accounts.

Staff Profile:

Anna Fahey
Senior Director of Strategy

When I first heard about Sightline Institute, it was 2006. I was sweating through a busy summer in eastern Washington, managing a campaign in the fourth congressional district by day—the vast, sparsely populated center of the state stretching north from the Columbia River nearly to the Canadian border. And by night, putting finishing touches on a thesis for my master’s in communications, a laughably heady analysis of “hegemonic masculinity” in the Southern Baptist Convention’s political maneuverings.

My congressional candidate never stood a chance. But I had caught the political bug, thrilling in the pace and immediacy of life on the campaign trail. I was listening to people from all walks of life, hearing their stories, and talking with them about their hopes, dreams, and priorities. I was stumping in the back rooms of Denny’s restaurants and far-flung rural Rotary clubs, hearing from apple growers, nuclear reactor workers, sport fishing conservationists, and rural homemakers. I was learning how to digest “kitchen table” policy priorities and boil them into kitchen table messages.

Who knew I was taking the first steps on a path I’d stay on—at Sightline?

“I had planned to start a PhD program, but Sightline held an irresistible promise: it would keep my feet on the ground, putting words to work in pursuit of real-time, real-world solutions. I joined the team and I’ve never looked back!”

“Thank you, Sightline team, for the smart, creative work and dedication to keep Cascadia sustainable.”

SHANNON, SEATTLE
My life has changed a lot since then; I got married and became a mom (times two). I traded in the city life for my hometown, returning to the little island community where I grew up, beachcombing and working on my parents’ commercial fishing boats. These days, I’m exploring my old haunts, the beaches and woods, with my kids.

My work at Sightline has evolved just as dramatically. Early on, I studied and crafted narratives about broad concepts (e.g., the commonly held values that align environmentalists; basic climate science—a.k.a. “it’s real”). I graduated to devising metaphors and “social math” to break down complex topics: housing shortages; zoning for low-carbon, affordable cities; cap and trade; proportional representation; the dangerous magnitude of proposed coal exports. Sightline’s framing recommendations were always open-source, and we shared messaging research and tips with communications practitioners and advocates via our “Flashcards” emails. For many years, we only occasionally met with elected officials or commented on specific bills.

Today, we meet with legislators all the time. Plus, we regularly roll up our sleeves to work together with local and tribal leaders, community groups, issue advocates, and cross-partisan coalitions to develop targeted communications strategies—with the explicit aim to usher specific bills into law.

This policy engagement can be behind-the-scenes or public-facing. We’re getting the hang of both the art and science of mapping political pathways, navigating opportunities and obstacles, and deploying Sightline’s signature combo of targeted and coordinated communications, from talking points and testimony to videos, press strategy, opinion research, and case-making. (Guess what? Housing solutions are salmon solutions!)

In other words, today, and looking forward, I’m back where I started: I’m lucky enough to be in the thrill of “campaign” mode, where the pace is fast and the real-world stakes and potential impacts are big. I’m connecting with people about their kitchen table concerns and translating wonky, complex policy ideas into everyday language. I’m mapping public policy to what matters: to opportunities for our kids and grandkids, to our health, to our hopes and dreams for our communities, and to our shared values that drive us to take care of the places we love—the Cascadian places we call home.

Anna
Statement of Financial Position  
December 31, 2023

ASSETS

Cash and investments $ 5,599,578
Donations and grants receivable 1,903,740
Other assets 59,790
Total assets $ 7,563,108

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Liabilities
Accounts Payable $ 56,938
Credit Cards (424)
Other Current Liabilities 414,971
Total liabilities 471,484

NET ASSETS

With Donor Restrictions 1,306,234
Without Donor Restrictions 5,785,390
Total net assets 7,091,624

Total liabilities and net assets $ 7,563,108

Statement of Activities
For the Year Ended December 31, 2023

REVENUE

Grants $ 3,923,594
Contributions 728,316
Investment revenue 373,814
Fees for services and miscellaneous income 97,796
Total revenue 5,123,519

EXPENSES

Personnel expense 2,256,234
Contract services 491,546
Rent and operations 107,891
Other expenses 189,254
Total expenses 3,044,925

Change in net assets 2,078,594
Net assets, beginning of year 5,013,030
Net assets, end of year $ 7,091,624

Change in Cash and Investments
For the Year Ended December 31, 2023

Net change in cash and investments $ 596,592
Cash and investments, beginning of year 5,002,987
Cash and investments, end of year $ 5,599,578

These figures are preliminary and have not yet been audited by an independent accountant. For a copy of the audited financial statements, please contact Meaghan Robbins by calling 888-447-1880 ext. 110.