



PLANNING COMMISSION CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

PCB 24-03
February 28, 2024
Regular Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	PCB 24-03: Comprehensive Plan Update: Climate Action Plan-Related Amendments	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Recommendation
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Discuss options for amending the Land Use Element and provide initial direction to staff.	

STAFF:	Alison Van Gorp, CPD Deputy Director	
EXHIBITS:	1. Excerpts from Draft Element 2 - Land Use Element 2. CAP-Land Use Element Comparison Chart	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this Planning Commission bill is to provide an overview of the goals and policies in the draft Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element related to climate and the Climate Action Plan (CAP), and to seek the commission’s initial direction on how to address climate in the 2024 periodic update of the Comprehensive Plan.

- Initial updates to the Land Use Element were reviewed by the Planning Commission in 2022.
- The CAP was adopted in 2023.
- The Growth Management Act now requires the City to create a Climate Element with greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction and resilience subelements by 2029.
- The Land Use Element needs further amendments to reflect and remain consistent with the CAP.

BACKGROUND

Land Use Element

The Planning Commission initially reviewed and revised the Land Use Element in Q3-Q4 2022, finalizing a public review draft in November 2022 ([PCB 22-19](#)). At the time the draft was finalized, it was noted in the draft that additional changes would likely be needed to align with the CAP, which was due to be adopted in 2023. Excerpts of the draft Land Use Element are included as Exhibit 1, which includes just the sections of the element that pertain to sustainability and climate.

Climate Action Plan

The CAP was subsequently adopted in April 2023 ([AB 6246](#)). The process to draft and review the CAP was lengthy, spanning approximately 18 months, and involved substantial public outreach and involvement, including two community workshops and a statistically valid survey. The CAP process is well documented on [Let’s Talk](#), including summaries of the public input that was received. The adopted [Climate Action Plan](#) identifies goals, targets, strategies and actions for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adapting to the likely impacts of climate change across six focus areas:

1. Cross-Cutting and Municipal
2. Buildings and Energy
3. Transportation
4. Consumption and Disposal

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5. Natural Systems
 6. Community Resilience

The Comprehensive Plan will adopt the CAP by a dynamic reference in (e.g. “The most recent version of the Mercer Island Climate Action Plan is hereby adopted”). This means that when the CAP is updated in the future, the Comprehensive Plan will not need to be updated as well.

Future Climate Element

State legislation passed in 2023 ([HB 1181](#)) requires the City to adopt a Climate Element in the Comprehensive Plan by 2029. HB 1181 amended the Growth Management Act (GMA) to establish the required components of the Climate Element, which is designed to result in reductions in overall greenhouse gas emissions and enhance resilience to and avoid the adverse impacts of climate change. The Climate Element must contain two sub-elements:

1. Greenhouse gas emissions sub-element: goals and policies to reduce emissions and vehicle miles traveled, and
2. Resilience sub-element: goals and policies to improve climate preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

Adoption of a Climate Element was not included in the scope of work for the 2024 periodic update adopted by the City Council in March 2022 ([AB 6040](#)). City staff anticipate the work required to comply with HB 1181 will be undertaken in the future as a part of an annual update to the Comprehensive Plan, in advance of the legislative deadline (likely beginning in 2028).

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

The CAP represents the City’s most up to date and comprehensive aspirations and planning for addressing climate impacts. The existing climate-related sections in the Land Use Element (Exhibit 1) predate the extensive work that went into drafting the CAP. Existing goals and policies in the Land Use Element relate to and overlap with goals, targets, strategies, and actions identified in the CAP with varying levels of detail. In addition, the CAP also includes many issues/actions that are not currently discussed in the Comprehensive Plan or are only very briefly or tangentially covered. Exhibit 2 includes a table with existing Comprehensive Plan goals and policies (with draft amendments included) compared with corresponding focus areas, goals, and strategies from the CAP.

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission review the existing climate-related goals and policies in the Land Use Element and consider removing goals/policies that are redundant or do not align with the CAP. This may be as simple as removing all climate-related goals/policies in favor of relying fully on the goals/strategies of the CAP, which will be adopted by dynamic reference as described above. Alternatively, the goals and strategies identified in the CAP could be transposed verbatim to the Comprehensive Plan, however this may necessitate a Comprehensive Plan amendment in the future if the CAP is substantially revised. Staff do not recommend including additional or different goals and policies related to climate in the Comprehensive Plan that are not included in the CAP because the Comprehensive Plan must be consistent with an adopted plan such as the CAP.

Finally, staff are seeking direction on whether to move climate-related goals and policies from the Land Use Element into a new Climate Element as a part of the 2024 periodic update. If this were pursued, the new element would not fully comply with the provisions of HB 1181 in the 2024 periodic update. However, it may make the future amendments required by this legislation more straight forward, since we would likely only need to amend the new Climate Element and the Transportation Element.

NEXT STEPS

Staff request the Commission's initial input and direction at the February 28 meeting. This will be incorporated into an updated draft of the Land Use Element and potentially a new Climate Element for review by the Commission, likely in March.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Discuss options for amending the Land Use Element and provide initial direction to staff.