



**BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND**

**AB 5965
November 1, 2021
Regular Business**

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	AB 5965: Sustainability/Climate Action Plan Scoping	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Review proposed timeline and scope for Mercer Island Climate Action Plan and authorize requested funding for consultant support.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution

DEPARTMENT:	Public Works		
STAFF:	Jason Kintner, Chief of Operations Ross Freeman, Sustainability Program Analyst		
COUNCIL LIAISON:	Benson Wong	Craig Reynolds	Salim Nice
EXHIBITS:	1. Proposed Scope of Work ("Charter") 2. Summary of Other Cities' Climate Planning Process		
CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:	1. Prepare for the impacts of growth and change with a continued consideration on environmental sustainability.		

AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE	\$ Choose an item.
AMOUNT BUDGETED	\$ Choose an item.
APPROPRIATION REQUIRED	\$ Choose an item.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda bill is to review with the City Council the proposed timeline and scope of work for the development of a Climate Action Plan and to authorize funding for this work.

BACKGROUND

The adopted 2021-2022 work plan includes development of a Climate Action Plan to address environmental and climate concerns. Although this item was identified in the work plan, the scope of work was not developed, and funding was not included in the 2021-2022 biennial budget.

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN OVERVIEW

The City is developing its first Climate Action Plan to establish a roadmap for reducing greenhouse gas emissions as well as preparing for the expected impacts of climate change.

Development of the proposed scope of work for the Climate Action Plan began in September 2021 in collaboration with the City Council Sustainability Committee. The Committee proposed a general scope of work for the Plan – see Exhibit 1. The committee recommends a focused plan and an accelerated timeline for completion, with adoption anticipated at the end of 2022.

The Climate Action Plan will provide a range of actions and policies the City can execute to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in arenas such as buildings, transportation, waste, while also protecting natural areas and water quality. The Plan will also address resilience and adaptation to some of the impacts of climate change that are already upon us.

The Plan will serve as a resource to City staff, elected officials and residents to reach emissions targets. Given that only 2% of Mercer Island emissions are due to government operations, participation by the community will be critical to achieving meaningful carbon reductions and other measures of sustainability.

For additional background information on climate planning, the MRSC [recently provided](#) a brief overview of their typical contents and development process.

POLICY NEED

Taking decisive climate action has never been more urgent in Pacific Northwest communities. We are already experiencing the economic and health impacts of changes to our global climate patterns including rising temperatures, changes in rainfall and river flow, and reduced snowpack. Communities with significant topography like Mercer Island will witness more landslides from intense rain events in the winter. Conversely, hotter, drier summers are making wildfire increasingly likely even west of the Cascade Mountains. Air quality impacts from the persistent smoke plumes generated by these fires are well documented and all too familiar in recent years. Extensive detail is available in Pacific Northwest chapter of the [Fourth National Climate Assessment](#) (2018), led by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

According to experts at the University of Washington's [Climate Impacts Group](#), there is no better example of the changes ahead than the unprecedented June 2021 heatwave that swept across the Pacific Northwest (PNW), resulting in record-breaking temperatures that climbed 30°F above average. Seattle exceeded 100 degrees Fahrenheit for three days straight, reaching a peak of 108°F, and Portland, Oregon reached 116°F. As one of the least air-conditioned regions in the United States (just 54% of homes in Seattle), the PNW experienced a significant spike in heat-related deaths and illnesses. Exacerbated by an unusually dry spring, the extreme "heat dome" event had additional widespread impacts, including damage to road surfaces, shutting down light rail, power outages, and wildfires. Unfortunately, heat events will become more common as average air temperatures in our region are now anticipated to increase 5.5°F by 2050. Every action that communities take now will reduce the severity of these future impacts.

The State Legislature has recently passed several notable measures, such as the [Climate Commitment Act](#) (2021), which places an economy-wide cap on carbon to meet state GHG reduction targets, and the [Clean Energy Transformation Act](#) (2019) which will eliminate coal power from the electrical grid by 2025 and transition the state to 100% clean electricity by 2045.

Yet a lot of the day-to-day actions and choices in reducing emissions and protecting the environment occur at the local level, and the Mercer Island Climate Action Plan will organize and prioritize these actions and policies, building on the long history of stewardship the community has already demonstrated. This history of climate actions includes two successful rooftop solar promotional campaigns, commercial green building requirements in Town Center, very high rates of green power enrollment among residents, and the purchase of 100% wind energy to power all City government operations. Mercer Island was also one of the founding members of the King County-Cities Climate Collaboration (K4C), has converted almost all street and parking

lot lighting to LED, and has been able to increase its tree canopy by 8% from 2007 to 2017. Other significant milestones are listed on the [City's sustainability webpages](#).

A holistic Plan is needed to track these existing programs and establish further community sustainability goals and policies. Much like other multi-year planning documents, the Climate Action Plan will prioritize policies and actions, assess their contribution to emissions goals, map out implementation pathways, and estimate the budget and other resources required to get there. Mercer Island's Climate Action Plan is the next step in the City's environmental legacy: addressing the global challenge of climate change by taking local action now.

While all of us will face increasing impacts of changing climate—including threats to human health, property, and access to basic resources—we all have varying capacities and resources to adapt to these changes. It has become clear that climate change multiplies existing social inequities and puts the heaviest burden on our community's most vulnerable groups; the City's Plan must ensure that equity is part of the assessment process.

PROPOSED SCOPE OF WORK

The City Council Sustainability Committee recommends a more constrained process that can be accomplished within a shorter timeframe; as a result, the City will pursue a Climate Action Plan only, rather than a more comprehensive Sustainability and Climate Plan. Three nearby cities currently have climate plans underway (Burien, Issaquah, and Shoreline), each using a similar process that generally includes the following steps:

- Completing a GHG inventory and future emissions forecast
- Contracting for technical assistance from local consultants to assist with plan development and public engagement
- Determining the draft GHG-reduction policies and action items that are the best fit for their communities and incorporate these into a draft plan.

Each of these three cities is developing a smaller plan with more limited scope and tighter range of suggested actions, compared to three larger cities, which each developed very extensive and exhaustive documents in 2020 (i.e. Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond). A summary of the ways that all six cities have approached climate planning, including timeline, budget, consulting support, and the scope of work, is included as Exhibit 2.

Each of the smaller cities is focusing their Climate Action Plan on specific topics and these are suggested as the best structure for Mercer Island's Climate Action Plan. They can be loosely summarized as:

- Mobility/Transportation
- Buildings and Energy
- Land Use, Waste/Recycling, Consumption
- Natural Resources/Trees/Water
- Community Resilience

Mercer Island will explore and review other cities' climate and sustainability plans for relevant actions that apply to the City and may be considered for incorporation into the Plan. Staff will also draw from the focused lists of suggested strategies in the new [K4C Climate Action Toolkit](#).

BUDGET

Staff currently estimates about **\$100,000-\$125,000** will be needed in consulting services to develop the Climate Action Plan in the accelerated timeframe. Additional funding may be needed depending on the final scope of work for the project.

As depicted in Exhibit 2, all but one city used consulting support to support their planning process, and for the smaller cities, this amount has ranged from \$50,000-100,000 over an 18-24 month period, and is most often used for GHG calculations, technical review, and community outreach and engagement activities. Some cities elected to use their consultants to perform the actual writing of their plan and develop graphics. Based on discussions with other cities, the amount of iterative public engagement significantly impacts consulting costs.

CITY COUNCIL INPUT

During the scoping process, the Sustainability Committee has answered the following framing questions, which are also asked of City Council tonight:

1. *What do you feel are the most important areas to focus on for the City's Plan?*
Some sample answers: "Focus on action and urgency"; "Spend less time planning and more on implementing"; "Choose achievable actions vs. a long to-do list"; "It is important to be thorough"; "Borrow from other regional plans and align with King County goals."
2. *What does successful public engagement on the Plan look like to you?*
Some sample answers: "Engage youth"; "Engage business"; "Engage non-traditional and minority voices"; "Energize the community to get involved in multiple ways"; "Tell people how their feedback was used"; "Don't overlook local expertise/advocates."

ACCELERATED TIMELINE

The Planning process has begun, and adoption by the full City Council is targeted by December 2022. A complete timeline can be viewed in Exhibit 1. If the City Council agrees with tonight's proposal and allocates funding, staff will issue a RFP to seek consulting support and join an online service that assists with GHG data entry and analysis (hosted by [ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability](#), this platform is now used by most other cities in the region).

At this time, this appropriation is not yet included in the mid-biennial budget proposal and is currently reflected as a "pending item." Staff recommends appropriating the funds now to provide certainty to interested consultants and help maintain the accelerated timeline. The City Council may also choose to wait until the RFP process is complete and approve the funding at a future Council Meeting.

A public Community Climate Kickoff Meeting is tentatively planned for December 8, to be hosted online by Sustainable-Mercer Island and other partner organizations.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Approve suggested Scope of Work and direct staff to include the appropriation request in the mid-biennial budget proposal for consideration at the November 16, 2021, City Council meeting.