

City of Mercer Island – Climate Action Plan

Project Charter & Scope of Work

26 October, 2021

Project Team

The Climate Action Plan Scope has been developed by the following:

- Ross Freeman, Sustainability Analyst, Project Lead
- City Council Sustainability Committee
- Supporting staff from other City Departments (City Manager, CPD, Public Works and others)

When fully underway, many others will also contribute to the planning process, including:

- City Council, City Boards and Commissions
- The community and advisory groups
- Supporting consultant

Project Vision

[PENDING] To be considered by City Council and community advisory groups

The City recognizes that immediate action is needed to ensure that Mercer Island reduces emissions and increases climate resilience. A combination of practical approaches and cutting-edge policies will deliver a healthy ecosystem and low-carbon future for all residents. City government will lead by example and continue to collaborate with partners. Through active public engagement, the community will reduce energy use and waste, improve air quality, preserve our local landscapes, decrease risk to people and property, and secure an equitable quality of life for all.

Section 1 – Project Overview

1.1 Problem/Opportunity Statement

As discussed in the City’s Comprehensive Plan (see [Land Use - Sustainability section](#)), sustainability is a subject of keen interest for many residents, and the City has long desired a Sustainability and/or Climate Action Plan (the “Plan”), but does not currently have such a strategic document. The City Council included development of a Climate Action Plan in the 2021-2022 Sustainability Work Plan.

1.2 Project Purpose

The Plan will establish goals and objectives to guide the City’s response to the climate crisis. Based on the best data available, and with input from a wide range of experts and stakeholders (such as residents, businesses, Chamber of Commerce, utilities, environmental groups, consultants, schools, the faith community, and others), the Plan will prioritize reduction of Mercer Island’s GHG emissions, resiliency in our built and natural environments, and alignment of our efforts with peer cities, King County, and the State of Washington.

1.3 Project Approach and Management

The lead staff for development of the Plan are based in the Public Works Department, but the work will be supported by all City Departments. The City Council and boards and commissions will also engage in the development and drafting of the Plan.

The City will use consulting support for technical project and data tasks, some assistance in Plan writing and graphics, and support for the City's outreach and public engagement activities. The City will also seek appropriate community volunteer support.

The City Council Sustainability Committee will provide support for this project by serving in a policy advisory role at the direction of the City Council. At key milestones, draft work products will be presented to the entire City Council, boards and commissions, and the community at large for input and suggestions. The City Council will adopt the final Plan.

1.4 Project Scope and Plan Development

A sustainability and climate action planning process consists of multiple steps, most often including the following in approximately the order listed below:

a. Phase 1 – Baseline Analysis

1. Conduct a GHG inventory (both community & government operations) to identify emission sources, and develop an emissions forecast based on population growth, economic activity, etc. (Note: most cities typically conduct inventories every 2-3 years).
2. Identify and align with regional efforts such as the City's commitments that have been already made under the King County-Cities Climate Collaboration (K4C). A "wedge analysis" for Mercer Island that ranks the relative impact of various federal, state, and regional GHG reduction programs is expected from King County in Q2 2022, as part of the Puget Sound Regional Emissions Analysis Project.
3. Review other Citywide planning documents to incorporate relevant existing goals and objectives, and recommend updates where appropriate.

Public engagement in this phase tends to be limited due to the technical nature of the subject matter and the type of research being conducted; however, staff recommends a Community Climate Kickoff to introduce the process to the public, understand community values, and gather community priorities.

b. Phase 2 – Develop of Plan Framework

1. Set quantifiable targets for GHG emissions reductions, as well as other measures addressing sustainability and resilience. The first draft is typically informed by subject matter experts (staff, consultants, advisory groups).
2. Begin to develop goals, strategies and actions to achieve the City's targets.
3. Determine how actions will be prioritized.

Public engagement increases in this phase as feedback on the proposed structure of the Plan, choice of focus areas, as well as the range of draft GHG goals, strategies and actions is collected.

c. Phase 3 – Draft and Finalize Plan

1. Develop a section on implementation strategies and identify the resources needed to achieve the goals and objectives.
2. Draft Plan text and graphics.
3. Gather feedback during formal public review.
4. Finalize and adopt Plan (staff anticipate appending it to the City’s Comprehensive Plan).

Public engagement in this phase gathers comments and input on the written draft of the Plan.

d. Phase 4 – Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting

1. Implement prioritized actions.
2. Identify climate actions for funding in biennial budget requests.
3. Conduct annual monitoring and reporting (format *tbd*).

Section 2 – Budget

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

In a survey of six other neighboring cities with recently completed plans, or with plans currently being drafted, all have used consulting support (or in-house experts, in Kirkland’s case) to support the planning process. For smaller cities, this amount has averaged \$50,000-\$100,000 over 18-24 months, and is most often used for GHG calculations, technical review, and community outreach and engagement activities. Some cities paid to have a consultant perform the actual writing of their plan and develop graphics. Based on discussions with other cities’ about their plan development process, the amount of iterative public engagement significantly impacts consulting costs.

Section 3 – Public Engagement

The Plan will include a public engagement component to ensure that the Plan reflects the priorities, ideas, and values of the Mercer Island community while also enhancing partnerships that will be key to the implementation and the success of the adopted goals and objectives. Given that only 2% of Island-wide emissions are due to government operations, participation by the majority of community members, businesses, and other organizations is critical to successful sustainability and climate goal achievement.

The public engagement strategy will include:

- Establishing a Let’s Talk Page to track plan development timeline and solicit feedback.
- Use of social media (e.g Facebook, Twitter, NextDoor), MI Weekly, news releases, and/or other tools to provide regular project updates as needed.
- Scheduled presentations at City Council Meetings, and other updates to Council

- One or more community surveys gathering feedback on draft goals and actions.
- Engagement with neighboring cities, King County, PSE, Recology, and others.
- Engagement at key stages of the drafting process with groups such as e.g., Island Vision, Mercer Island Climate Action Now, Sustainable MI, Mercer Island School District, Mercer Island Chamber of Commerce, etc.
- Feedback on the draft plan from the City Council, key staff, and boards and commissions

Section 4 – Subject Matter Focus Areas

A number of larger cities in the region have recently completed their climate and/or sustainability action plans with extended public engagement phases and exhaustive research. Three smaller cities – Burien, Issaquah, and Shoreline – currently have plans in development using a more limited scope and narrower range of suggested climate actions. In the interests of maintaining a tighter focus, each of these cities is developing a climate plan only, and leaving general sustainability matters to be covered in other city documents. Given Mercer Island’s short timeline, this is the recommended approach for our Plan. Each city is using approximately the same focus areas, and these are the best structure for the 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 that can be borrowed, as well as format/layout ideas, and other concepts. Staff will also draw from the lists of suggested strategies in the new [K4C Climate Action Toolkit](#).

Section 5 – Project Milestones & Proposed Timeline

2021

September:

- Kickoff project scoping meeting with City Council Sustainability Committee (Sept 16)
- Develop Plan Charter & Draft Vision
- Continue updating City and Community GHG data

October:

- Join ICLEI & learn ClearPath GHG analysis software
- Finalize Draft Charter and Scope (Oct 21 Sustainability Committee meeting)

November:

- Present Scope, Budget, Timeline to full Council at Nov 1 Council Meeting (AB 5965)
- Draft and issue RFP for consulting support
- Launch Webpage
- Finish GHG data inventory

December

- Enter GHG data into ICLEI ClearPath software; begin analysis
- Hold Community Climate Kickoff Meeting online hosted by Sustainable-MI (Dec 8)

2022

January:

- Interview and select consultant
- Develop community engagement plan with consultant support
- Set up Let's Talk page to gather comments

February:

- Set GHG reduction targets based on existing K4C Commitments and ICLEI software analysis.
- Identify proposed GHG goals, top strategies & preferred actions using K4C Toolkit, plans from other comparable cities, staff input, consultants and subject matter experts.

March:

- Community Engagement #1: Initial Feedback on focus areas, Goals, Objectives
 - First online Survey
 - Community meeting
 - Stakeholder meetings
 - Board and Commission meetings
 - Staff engagement
- City Council Study Session – update on timeline, review of public input, feedback on goals

April:

- Additional Board and Commission meetings
- Evaluate feedback
- Begin drafting full Plan

June:

- Continue drafting Plan (text and graphics)

August:

- Internal staff review of Draft Plan

September:

- Community Engagement #2: Input on Draft Plan
 - Second online survey
 - Community meeting
 - Stakeholder meetings
 - Board and Commission review
- City Council meeting update

2022

October:

- Incorporate feedback

- Final review and recommendation from Sustainability Committee

November/December:

- City Council review and edits to Plan
- City Council adoption of Climate Action Plan
- Prepare for Comprehensive Plan Amendment

Most Recent Mercer Island GHG Status (*Updating Underway*)

