



Community Development Department

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MEMORANDUM

To: Planning Commission
From: Ashley Wragge
Date: February 20, 2024
Subject: Comprehensive Plan Update – Environment Element Goals and Policies

Introduction

The Washington Growth Management Act (GMA) requires King County and cities within King County to update their comprehensive plans on or before December 31, 2024. The environment chapter (sometimes referred to as an “element”) is not a required element but provides the policy framework for the critical areas ordinance and is an important element to the City.

Background

At the December 4, 2023 meeting Staff and consultants presented an overview of the environment chapter, and its requirements under the Growth Management Act, GMA. On January 16, 2024, environmental policies were presented to the Planning Commission including environmental protection and Climate Planning and Resiliency. The Planning Commission did not have any recommended changes to the Environmental Protection policies; but did request staff and consultants review the Washington State Department of Commerce Climate Element Planning Guidance, issued on January 16, 2023 and discern whether it was appropriate to consider draft climate change goals and policies as part of the Environmental Element.

The new guidance requires Resilience and Green House Emissions Reductions Sub-elements. Over 200 policies are offered for local jurisdiction review and inclusion. The Climate Change Element is not required to be completed as part of the 2024 periodic update. Based on a review of the Climate Element Planning Guidance, staff decided to postpone further review of draft climate change goals and policies until work on the Climate Element begins.

Analysis

On January 16 and February 5, 2024, environmental policies were presented to the Planning Commission on environmental protection, Climate Planning and Resiliency, Water Resources, Aquifers and Critical Recharge Areas; Snoqualmie River, Stream Corridors and Wetlands; Geologic and Flood Hazard Areas as well as draft goals. The Commissions requested changes to the policy: regarding pursue strategies to lower the City's classification rating in the federal FEMA program by adding a period to the end of program.

The Commission review and discussed a table with all the draft policies and new draft goals. The table also included Tribal edits to the draft policies received by the City after the January 16, 2024 Planning Commission meeting. The Commission requested additional information on following draft policies:

- Apply Best Available Science, including Traditional Ecological Knowledge, to protect critical areas such as wetlands, landslide hazard and erosion-prone areas, and maintain these areas in their natural condition, including native vegetation preservation.
- Establish and maintain relations Follow the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent with regard to Native American tribes for the preservation of archaeological sites and traditional cultural properties that are vulnerable to climate impacts.

Following the Planning Commission meeting additional information was provided to the Commission on February 5 and February 7, 2024.

Next Steps

Verify collective agreement on draft Environmental goals and policies to be signed and transmitted to Council Community Development Committee on March 4, 2024.