

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 24, 2023
To: Planning Commission
From: Brad Medrud, Planning Manager



2025 Comprehensive Plan Update – Climate Element

On a ten-year cycle, the City is required to conduct a Growth Management Act periodic update of its Comprehensive Plan and related development regulations. For the current cycle, the City is required to complete work on the periodic update by June 30, 2025. Work on the periodic update started last fall.

The updated Comprehensive Plan will address diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the Plan and incorporate a large number of state required changes addressing housing, climate change, and other topics.

The intent of the Planning Commission meeting on Tuesday, October 24, 2023, is to start the discussion of the new Climate Element by discussing the state requirements and next steps for preparing the Element.

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1 – New Requirements

On May 3, 2023, Governor Inslee signed into law HB 1181, which added a new climate change and resiliency goal to the Growth Management Act. The City will need to complete a new Climate Element by June 25, 2025 to meet the state deadline.

The legislation includes the following key changes:

- Adds as climate mitigation sub-element to address greenhouse gas emissions reduction as part of a Climate Element that is mandatory for the City and would require actions to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled.
- Adds a climate resilience sub-element as part of a Climate Element that is mandatory for the City. The Thurston Hazard Mitigation Plan can be adopted, by reference, to satisfy the climate resilience sub-element requirements.
- Requires consideration of environmental justice as part of the development of a Climate Element in order to avoid worsening environmental health disparities.

2 – Growth Management Act – Climate Change and Resiliency Goal

The state Growth Management Act (Chapter 36.70A RCW) requires that the City demonstrate that each Element in its Comprehensive Plan meets the relevant fifteen planning goals contained within the Act. The fifteen goals guide the development and adoption of the City's Comprehensive Plan and development regulations.

The following is a summary of how the new Climate Element will need to meet the goal related to climate change and resiliency. The state legislature added this goal in 2023.

- 14. Climate change and resiliency. Ensure that comprehensive plans, development regulations, and regional policies, plans, and strategies under RCW 36.70A.210 and chapter 47.80 RCW adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate; support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled; prepare for climate impact scenarios; foster resiliency to climate impacts and natural hazards;***

protect and enhance environmental, economic, and human health and safety; and advance environmental justice.

The Conservation Element, Land Use Element, and Transportation Plan of the Comprehensive Plan will need to address this as a new goal in coordination with the new Climate Element.

3 – Sub-Elements

The Climate Element will need to incorporate two sub-elements: climate mitigation, which addresses greenhouse gas reduction, and climate resilience.

A. Climate Mitigation

Climate mitigation addresses greenhouse gas emission reductions that involve actions taken to reduce or eliminate the emissions of greenhouse gases to reduce the rate and extent of climate change damage.

Greenhouse gases include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, sulfur hexafluoride, and any other gas or gases designated by the State Department of Ecology.

Increasing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are changing City's climate in ways that will impact both human and natural systems. In general, we can expect to experience hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters. These changes are anticipated to worsen existing hazards—like floods, landslides, and wildfires—and introduce new threats—like invasive plants, insects, and infectious diseases.

To ensure that the City significantly reduces local contributions to climate change, the Thurston Regional Planning Council, Thurston County, and the cities of Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater adopted the following greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets in 2021 as part of the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan:

- Forty-five percent reduction below 2015 levels by 2030; and
- Eighty-five percent below 2015 levels by 2050.

The City adopted the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan in 2021, the actions of which will be updated and incorporated into the climate mitigation sub-element of the City's new Climate Element.

The figures below are from the October 2022 2021 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory for Thurston County and show current greenhouse gas emissions, the emissions targets, and the breakdown of emissions by sector.

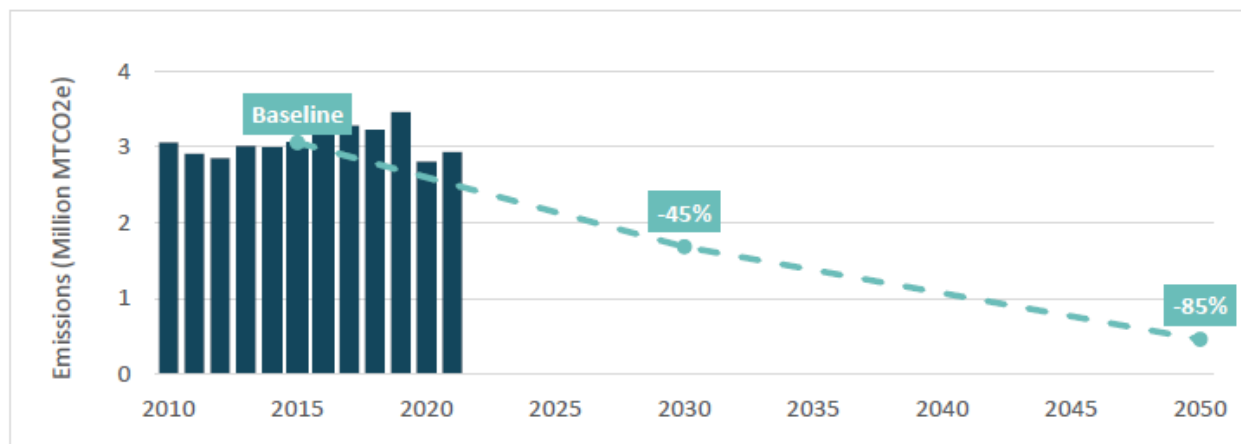


Figure 1. Total Emissions and Thurston County Climate Mitigation Plan Emission Reduction Targets.

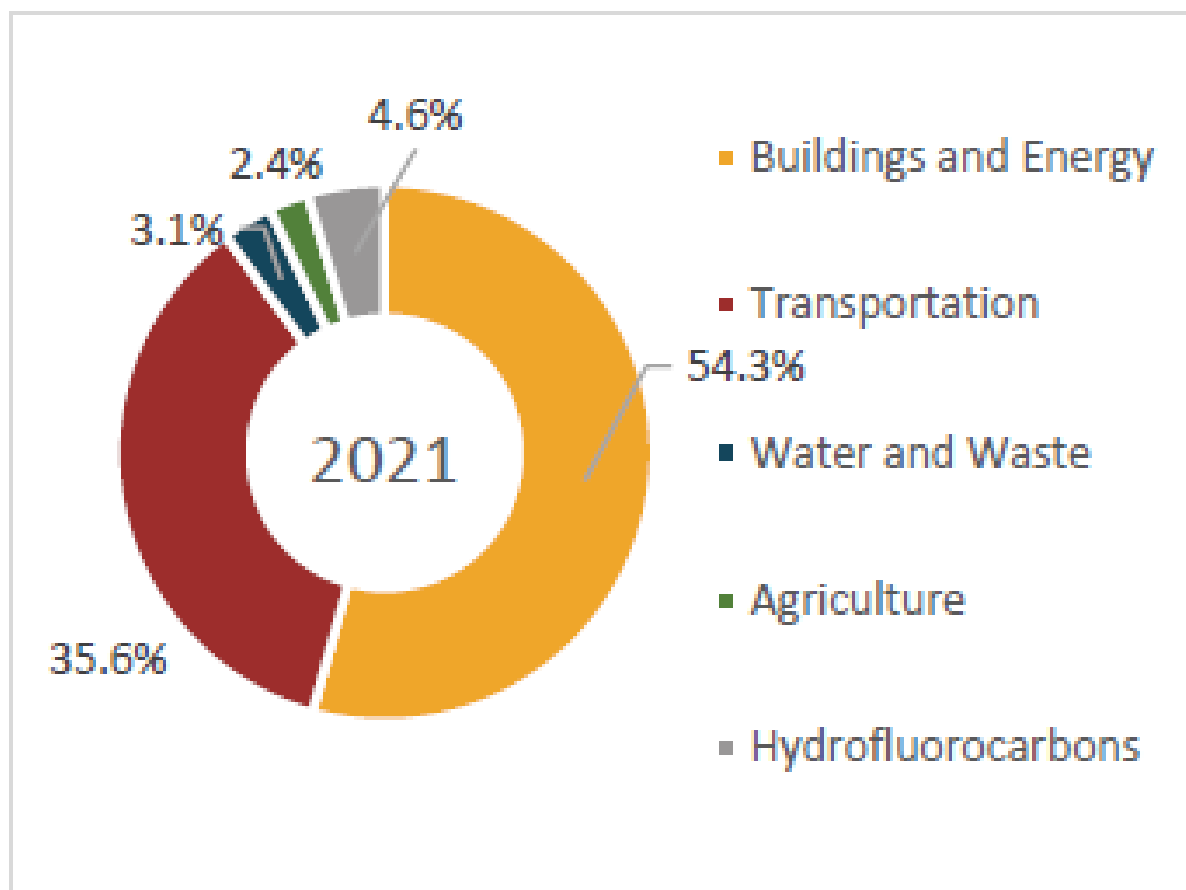
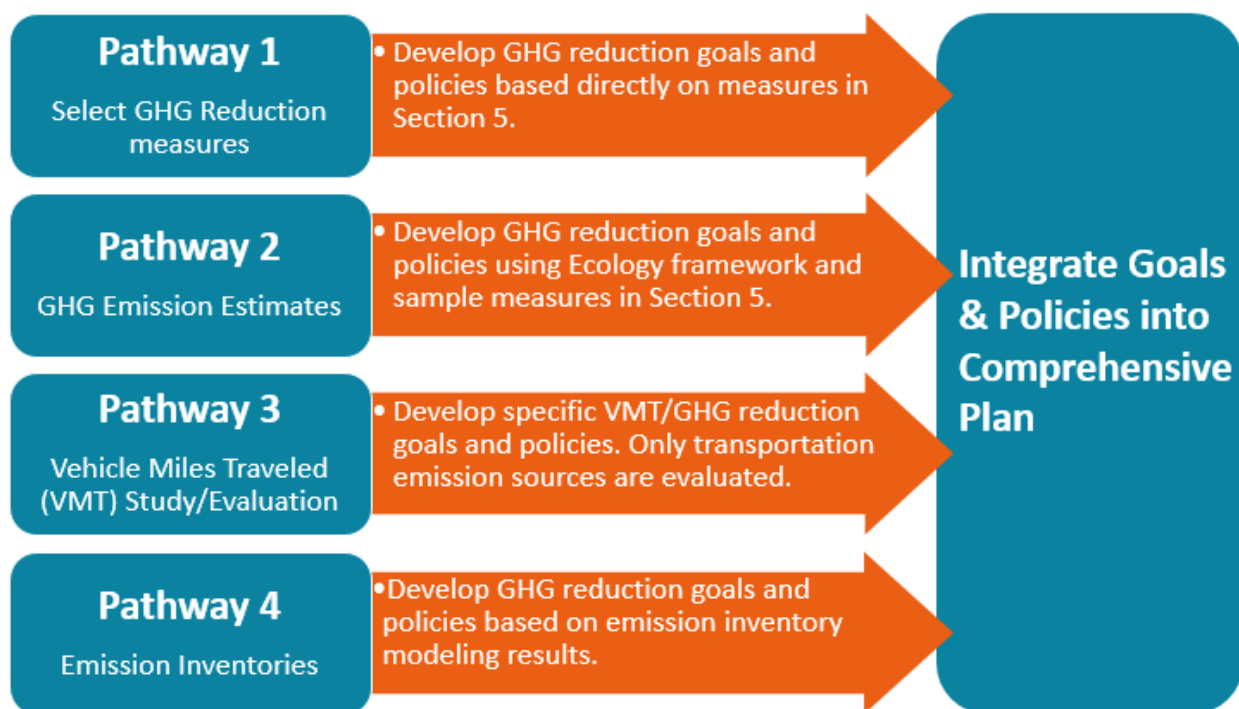


Figure 2. 2021 Emissions by Sector.

The State Department of Commerce has identified the following four pathways to meet the new state requirement for a climate mitigation sub-element.



Staff are currently exploring which pathways or parts of individual pathways taken together will be the best approach for the City to meet the state requirements.

B. Climate Resilience

RCW 70A.65.010 defines climate resilience as:

"...the ongoing process of anticipating, preparing for, and adapting to changes in climate and minimizing negative impacts to our natural systems, infrastructure, and communities. For natural systems, increasing climate resilience involves restoring and increasing the health, function, and integrity of our ecosystems and improving their ability to absorb and recover from climate-affected disturbances. For communities, increasing climate resilience means enhancing their ability to understand, prevent, adapt, and recover from climate impacts to people and infrastructure."

The State Department of Commerce has identified the following five step process to meet the new state requirement for a climate resilience sub-element.



The Thurston Hazard Mitigation Plan with the City of Tumwater annex is being updated now. The work on the Hazard Mitigation Plan to date has addressed Steps 1 through 3. The Hazard Mitigation Plan will be in substantial conformance with the state guidance, so in Step 4, the City will be adopting the Plan, by reference, to satisfy the state climate resilience sub-element requirements.

In addition, the Thurston Regional Planning Council adopted the Thurston Climate Adaption Plan in 2018, the actions of which will be updated and incorporated into the climate resilience sub-element of the City's new Climate Element.

4. Environmental Justice

The new state legislation requires that the Climate Element must:

- Prioritize greenhouse gas reductions in overburdened communities.
- Prioritize climate resilience in communities that will disproportionately suffer from compounding environmental impacts.

In addition, HB 1181 requires that as part of the required Comprehensive Plan periodic update process that:

- The Land Use Element avoids worsening environmental health disparities.
- The Transportation Plan ensures multimodal levels achieve environmental justice goals.

5. Transportation and Land Use Changes

In addition, the new state legislation requires other transportation and land use changes such as:

- Requiring that the Washington State Department of Transportation maintain a summary of the per capita vehicle miles traveled for cities and the unincorporated portions of counties. This resource will in turn support the required updates to the Transportation Plan and the new Climate Element.
- Adds multimodal concurrency
- Must accommodate all users “safely, reliably and efficiently”

6 – Schedule

Phase 1 – Community Engagement (Summer 2023 – Fall 2023)

Staff are reviewing the state requirements for preparing a new Climate Element. The community and stakeholders will be introduced to the periodic update process through a series of communications and asked to prioritize the Comprehensive Plan’s vision, goals, and policies through a variety of media outreach methods, including surveys, utility inserts, open houses, informal meetings, presentations, and social media.

1) Gap Analysis

- To be completed by November 2023
- Process followed:
 1. Review the state requirements for the new Climate Element
 2. Using these materials:
 - Commerce Periodic Update Materials
 - *Climate Element Planning Guidance* (Commerce, July 2023)
 - 2022-23 State Legislation
 - Climate (E2SHB 1170/E2SHB 1181)
 - Plans Adopted by the City since 2016
 - Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan
 - Urban Forestry Management Plan
 - Specific Plans from Agencies Outside the City
 3. Identify what needs to be created to address the following:
 - Goals, policies, and actions

- Technical information

2) Schedule

- Initial Community Outreach
 - Complete by December 2023
- Data Collection
 - Complete by Spring 2024
- Gap Analysis
 - Complete by November 2023
- Internal Coordination Meetings
 - Started September 2023
- General Comprehensive Plan Meetings
 1. Update Check In
 - Joint City Council – Planning Commission Meeting
 - December 12, 2023
- Initial Climate Element Meetings
 1. Planning Commission Work Session
 - October 24, 2023
 2. General Government Committee Briefing
 - November 8, 2023

3) Specific Topics Addressed as Part of the Update

- Incorporate consideration of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion throughout
 1. Environmental Justice
 - Special consideration for environmental justice in goals and policies (E2SHB 1181)
- Comprehensive Plan Update
 1. General
 - Create a new format for the Comprehensive Plan that will be shorter, leaner, and more user friendly. The updated Comprehensive Plan will consist of shorter individual Elements and Plans with appendices that contain the required technical information.

- Use the new Community Outreach Plan for the periodic update process.
 - Create a new Comprehensive Plan Goal and Policy Guide for use by staff and policymakers.
 - Create a new User Guide to the Comprehensive Plan.
 - Create a new Glossary for the Comprehensive Plan.
 - The County-Wide Planning Policies (2015) will not be revised for the 2025 periodic update.
 - Ensure that the updated Comprehensive Plan is internally consistent.
 - Ensure that all the Elements and Plans are consistent with County-Wide Planning policies, the Growth Management Act, coordinated with the Plans of adjacent jurisdictions, individual Elements and Plans, and the future land use map.
 - Update all maps that are a part of the Comprehensive Plan.
 - Provide for a mutually agreeable Memorandum of Agreement between the City and tribes about collaboration and participation in the planning process unless otherwise agreed at the end of a mediation period.
 - Provide for consideration for preserving property rights. The City must evaluate proposed regulatory or administrative actions to assure that such actions do not result in an unconstitutional taking of private property
 - Update list of all adopted Plans.
 - Update City strategic priorities.
 - Revise planning period to 2025 – 2045.
 - Update discussion of Growth Management Act goals.
 - Add references to the updated Shoreline Master Program (2019), Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan (2021), and Urban Forestry Management Plan (2021).
 - Simplify, reduce, and update goals, policies, and actions.
2. Climate Element
- Needs to address two sub-elements: climate mitigation (greenhouse gas reduction) and climate resilience.
 - Greenhouse gas reduction or climate mitigation
 - Climate resilience
 - FEMA Hazard Mitigation Plans

Phase 2 – Plan Development (Winter 2024 – Fall 2024)

Feedback gathered through the community outreach process will be incorporated into the draft Conservation Element. Staff will present the drafts to the Planning Commission and General Government Committee as well as external and internal stakeholders and focus groups comprised of subject-area experts for review.

1) Community Outreach

- Intermediate Actions:
 - To be determined based on the results of Phase 1 and the Community Outreach Plan.

2) Schedule

- Continuing Community Outreach – January 2024 –June 2024
- Climate Element Development Meetings
 1. Includes Appendices
 2. Planning Commission Work Sessions
 - January 23, 2024
 - June 25, 2024
 3. General Government Committee Briefings
 - February 14, 2024
 - June 12, 2024
- Commerce Preliminary Review
 - Review of Comprehensive Plan Format
 - March 2024
- Complete Draft of Comprehensive Plan
 - All Elements, Maps, and Appendices
 - July 2024 – October 2024

Phase 3 – Legislative Process (Fall 2024 – June 30, 2025)

Staff will complete a draft version of the Comprehensive Plan during Phase III. Staff will present the draft to the Planning Commission and General Government Committee as well as external and internal stakeholders for review.

The Planning Commission will hold a number of work sessions to discuss the Comprehensive Plan and then conduct a public hearing to gather formal public comment on the draft Comprehensive Plan before developing findings of fact, conclusions, and recommendations that will be forwarded to City Council.

The City Council will hold a number of Work Sessions to discuss the Comprehensive Plan. The City Council will consider the recommendation forwarded by the Planning Commission.

The process will culminate in the adoption of an updated Comprehensive Plan by the Growth Management Act deadline of June 30, 2025.

1) Community Outreach

- Final Actions:
 - To be determined based on the results of Phase 2 and the Community Outreach Plan.

2) Schedule

- Commerce Review
 - Fall 2024 – Winter 2025
- Prepare Comprehensive Plan Update Ordinance
 - October 2024
- SEPA Review
 - November 2024 – December 2024
- Commerce Notice of Intent
 - November 2024 - December 2024
- Public Adoption Meetings
 1. Planning Commission
 - Briefing
 - November 26, 2024
 - Work Session
 - December 10, 2024 (Joint with City Council)
 - January 14, 2025
 - February 11, 2025
 - Public Hearing
 - February 25, 2025

2. General Government Committee
 - Briefing for Comprehensive Plan Update Ordinance
 - March 12, 2025
3. City Council Work Session
 - December 10, 2024 (Joint with Planning Commission)
 - April 15, 2025
 - May 27, 2025
4. City Council
 - June 17, 2025
- Notice of Adoption
 1. Submit Notice of Adoption to Commerce
 2. June 30, 2025

Appendix A – Guidance

The State Department of Commerce has provided guidance specific to the periodic update on their Periodic Update webpage

<https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/growth-management/periodic-update/>

www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/growth-management/growth-management-topics

In addition, the Puget Sound Regional Council is conducting a series of workshops on a variety of topics related to the periodic update.

www.psrc.org/our-work/passport-2044-comprehensive-plan-workshop-series

The Municipal Research Services Center has a Comprehensive Planning webpage as well as webpage addressing the new legislative requirements.

<https://mrsc.org/getdoc/d7964de5-4821-4c4d-8284-488ec30f8605/Comprehensive-Planning.aspx>

[MRSC - New Legislation Related to Climate and the Natural Environment](#)