

STAFF REPORT

Date: July 22, 2025

To: City Council

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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. By December 31, 2025, the City is required to develop a new Climate Element as part of the periodic update.

The intent of this agenda item before the City Council is to recap state requirements, discuss how staff received and incorporated public feedback, and discuss action prioritization as suggested by the Climate Advisory Policy Team (CPAT).

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1. State 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 adopt a new Climate

Element as part of 2025 Comprehensive Plan periodic update by December 31, 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.
- Requires that the City use 2022 as their emissions baseline year and set incremental targets that lead to achieving net zero emissions in 2050, consistent with Washington's statewide target.
- Adds a climate resilience sub-element as part of a Climate Element that is mandatory for the City.
- Requires consideration of environmental justice as part of the development of a Climate Element to avoid worsening environmental health disparities.

The new state legislation also 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.

A. 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, Land Use, and Transportation Elements of the Comprehensive Plan will need to address this as a new goal in coordination with the new Climate Element. A new overarching Comprehensive Plan goal will address increasing climate resiliency by promoting sustainability, reducing pollution, promoting health habitats, and supporting clean air and water.

B. Sub-Elements

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

1) Greenhouse Gas Reduction Sub-Element

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 (GHG) 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 the 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 (TCMP):

- 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. Note that the Plan's goals and baseline are not consistent with the new statewide requirements for a 2022 baseline year and net-zero by 2050 goal.

The figure below is from the Thurston County 2022 GHG Emissions Inventory by the Department of Commerce and shows current GHG emissions and the breakdown of GHG emissions by sector.

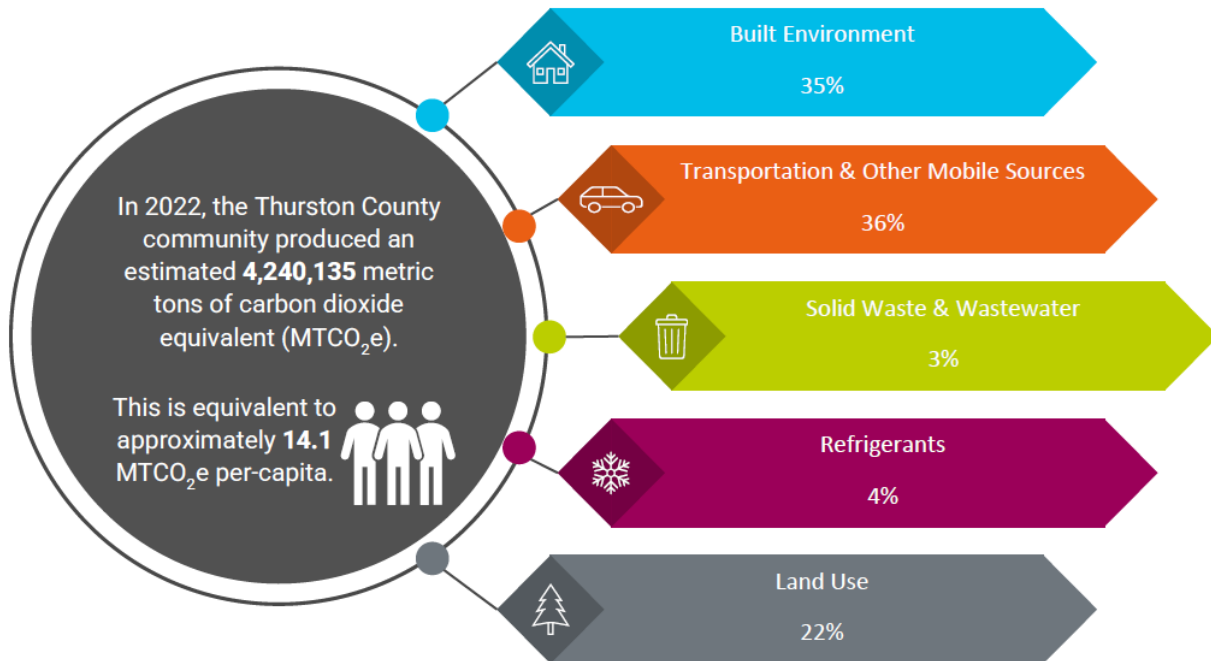


Figure 1. 2022 Emissions by Sector

This inventory is consistent with the inventories completed by the Thurston Climate Mitigation Collaborative in that the two largest emitting sectors are the built environment and transportation. As such, the bulk of our focus in the GHG Reduction Sub-Element is made up of goals and policies that address these emission sources.

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

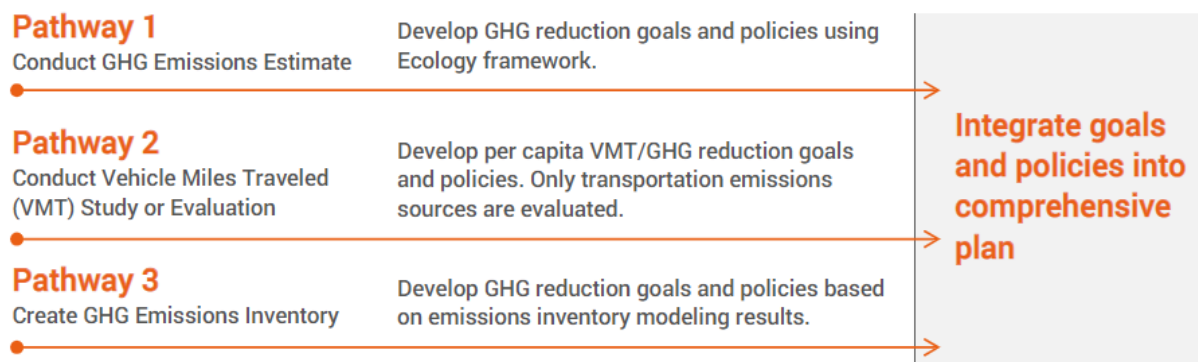


Figure 2. Pathway summary for GHG sub-element.

Staff pursued pathway one and supplement the Tumwater GHG estimate with the 2022 Thurston County GHG Emissions Inventory provided by the Department of Commerce. Department of Commerce staff have confirmed that this method is acceptable for meeting requirements.

2) Climate Resilience Sub-Element

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



Figure 3. Steps and pathways to integrate resilience into Comprehensive Plan.

The Department of Commerce developed and recommended a workbook to follow the steps shown above. When completing Step 2, our consultants audited 107 plans and policies and conducted a gap analysis. Our consultant then utilized the Climate Impacts Workgroup's Climate Mapping for a Resilient Washington tool to conduct a basic vulnerability assessment (Step 3). The results from those steps were then utilized to develop new goals and policies that complement the work already done in existing City plans and policies, such as the Thurston Hazards Mitigation Plan City of Tumwater annex (Step 4).

The Department of Commerce also encouraged jurisdictions to include at least one goal and policy for each of the eleven sectors in its resilience sub-element including:

- Agriculture & Food Systems
- Buildings & Energy
- Cultural Resource & Practices
- Economic Development
- Emergency Management
- Health & Well-being
- Ecosystems
- Transportation

- Waste Management
- Water resources
- Zoning & Development.

2. Community Outreach Results

A. Climate Policy Advisory Team (CPAT)

Guidance issued by the Washington State Department of Commerce suggests that jurisdictions assemble a Climate Policy Advisory Team, which is an interdisciplinary group of planners, public works professionals, and community members with a focus on helping to prepare the Climate Element. More specifically, the CPAT is intended to do the following:

- Support the analysis of climate information and provide recommendations on short- and long-term goals;
- Center equity in the creation of policy and the implementation of the Climate Element; and
- Represent stakeholders across the community, particularly communities that are or will be overburdened by the impacts of climate change.

Since established staff review was already established into the project scope and schedule, staff decided to focus on community members in the development of the CPAT. The City issued invitations to interested parties within and outside of the City, aiming to capture a mix of representation from the following groups:

- Government: Local, regional, and Tribal;
- Community groups and organizations (e.g., local businesses, non-profit and community-based organizations, charities, etc.);
- Subject matter experts from colleges, universities, research organizations, and consultants; and
- Affected populations (e.g., Black and Indigenous communities of color, youth and elderly populations, low-income communities, workers and labor unions, disabled and/or immunocompromised individuals, monolingual non-native speakers, etc.).



CPAT members Morris McKellery (top) and Janine Linsey (bottom) at the Climate Element Open House.

The CPAT was assembled in May 2024 with 13 members representing the above groups.

Table 1. CPAT Members and Affiliation

Name	Category	Affiliate Organization, if any
Rachel Childs	Affected populations	Homes First
Anna Stusser	Affected populations	Service Employees International Union*
Taylor Werner	Affected populations	IBEW 46 Rank and File member
Morris McKellery	Affected populations	Tumwater resident, visually impaired
Jessie Simmons	Community groups/organizations	Olympia Master Builders
Lynn Fitz-Hugh	Community groups/organizations	Restoring Earth Connections, Friends of Trees
Graham Clumpner	Affected populations	Tumwater resident, combat veteran
Anthony Levenda	Subject matter expert	Director of the Center for Climate Action and Sustainability at the Evergreen State College
Gordon Wheat	Subject matter expert	Physician, Physicians for Social Responsibility
Bernie Gertje	Subject matter expert	Transportation engineer
Kerri Wilson	Community groups/organizations	Tumwater resident, Intercity Transit Walk N Roll program supervisor
Janine Linsey	Community groups/organizations	Tumwater landlord, Thurston Climate Action Team
Clint Bryson	Affected populations	IBEW 76 Assistant Business Manager

Notes: *- Had to step down due to capacity issues during the Climate Element process but was involved in the beginning.

The CPAT members provided feedback on each draft of the Climate Element and worked with City staff in small working groups to develop specific policy and implementation action language, as well as review language recommended by the City.

The CPAT directly wrote or requested language for seven of the Climate Element's 69 policies and 30 of the Element's implementation actions. They reviewed, revised, and approved of all other policies and actions.

Members of the CPAT have requested to continue to provide advisory on an as-needed basis to the City of Tumwater as it moves forward with implementing the measures in this Climate Element.

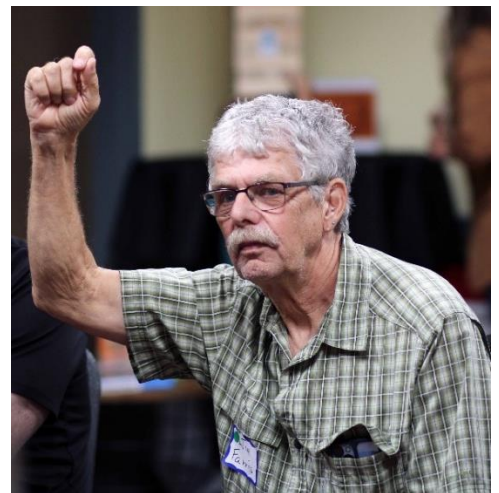
B. In-Person Open House

On August 14, 2024, a public workshop and open house was held in-person at the ASHHO Cultural Community Center in Tumwater with over 60 community members attending. The open house was advertised extensively by City staff and designed to promote inclusiveness and encourage participation from community members who might not always feel welcome or choose to participate in City-led engagement efforts.

The workshop featured a program with welcome remarks, three rotating table stations for smaller focus groups, group report-outs debriefing learnings and ideas, opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback, and closing remarks for event takeaways and next steps.

1) Key Themes

Across all focus groups, participants called for greater collaboration and engagement citywide, as well as a need to identify funding sources and provide financial incentives, safeguards, and subsidies to ensure equitable climate adaptation and mitigation. In addition, the three rotating table stations focused on three primary topic areas where participants could learn about and share their lived experiences and perspectives: (1) GHG emissions reduction strategies, (2) climate hazards and resilience, and (3) local governance and implementation.



Lin Crowley and Jim Farris at the Climate Element Open House

GHG Emissions Reduction Strategies

- Multimodal Transportation System Improvements: Requested actions ranged from expanding public transit access, enhancing bike accessibility and walkability, reducing car dependence, and increasing electric vehicle (EV) charging capabilities.
- Sustainable Land Use: Participants urged for preservation of green spaces and urban canopies, denser urban development, and elimination of minimum parking requirements.
- Energy: Participants suggested measures that would improve energy efficiency in buildings and encourage renewable energy generation. One participant expressed concern acute over the energy consumption of artificial intelligence (AI) data centers if they were to develop in Tumwater and how that would undermine all efforts.

Climate Hazards and Resilience

- Equity & Environmental Justice: Building resilience in low-income, historically disadvantaged areas that are disproportionately impacted by climate change.
- Climate Hazards: Actions that will address issues like wildfire smoke, power grid interruptions, and drought.
- Sustainable Practices: Managing water resources for Tumwater's future communities through water conservation methods and integrating and expanding the use of renewable energy sources.
- Urban and Land Use Planning: Improving connectivity, walkability, and bike infrastructure, implementing strategies to increase shade and mitigate urban heat islands, and managing Tumwater's projected population growth and housing needs sustainably and equitably.
- Wise Resource Management: Reducing reliance on resource-intensive industries and promoting and supporting sustainable businesses.

Local Governance and Implementation

- Building Public Trust: Participants noted some erosion of trust due to previous perceived failures to address community needs by the City in past efforts, particularly highlighting skepticism of long-term residents.
- Improving Communication: Finding ways to continuously and effectively communicate with diverse age groups and demographics, including targeted outreach to youth and underrepresented groups.
- Clarity and Transparency: Present community members with clear cost-benefit analyses of proposed actions and ensure Climate Element development is transparent and accessible.

C. Online Open House

The City developed a virtual open house featuring an online StoryMap requesting community member comments and questions on various key topics highlighted in the Climate Element. The online open house included the same information and asked the same questions that were presented at the in-person open house.

1) Summary of Responses

The City received over 70 responses through its Virtual Open House and StoryMap. Across topic areas, many comments focused on the importance of creating effective regulations to achieve the City's climate goals. Specific comments related to key topics are summarized below.

Equity

- **Question:**
 - What would you like Tumwater to do to address environmental justice issues and ensure that all residents have equal quality of life both before and after climate disasters?
- **Response Summary:** Respondents shared the importance of programs and incentives that support low-income, young, and elderly populations specifically, ranging from safe active transportation, cooling/heating centers, shade, tree canopy, housing affordability protections, and proactive planning for climate hazards like wildfires.

Greenhouse Gases

- **Questions:**
 - What is your lived experience with climate change? Does it change seasonally?
 - Have you made any changes to your home or routine due to climate change or its effects?
 - What greenhouse gas mitigation would you like to see improved, enhanced, or created if it does not exist now?
 - Take a look at the committed goals and actions identified in the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan. Do you feel there are goals and actions missing? Are the goals and actions identified in the TCMP still what the community wants to commit to?
- **Response Summary:** Some respondents shared they have experienced more extreme heat events, experiences with wildfires/smoke, and periods of increased drought. Some respondents added they have added changes to their homes or routines like installing heat pumps, using more air conditioning, transitioning to carbon-free transportation, recycling more, eating plant-based diets, and traveling less to reduce carbon emissions. Respondents shared a variety of ideas for further reducing greenhouse gas emissions, ranging from building electrification, education and outreach, improved EV charging, increased housing density, and active transportation infrastructure.

Resilience Mapping (Flooding, Heat)

- **Questions:**
 - What has been your experience with extreme heat in Tumwater?
 - Have you had access to all of the resources you needed during an extreme heat event? Is there anything you would like to have available to you in the future?
- **Response Summary:** Respondents shared they have experienced impacts from extreme heat events, with particular emphasis on disproportionate impacts for vulnerable

populations, as well as the need for resources to better withstand future events such as air conditioning units, heat pumps, and cooling shelters.

Governance

- **Questions:**
 - What does a resilient Tumwater look like to you?
 - What do you hope will be true about Tumwater in the future?
 - Are there areas within the city you are most concerned about regarding climate change impacts? If so, what are those areas?
 - How would you like the city to engage with you around climate change?
 - What could the City do to improve your trust in it/them?
 - How would you like to see equity addressed in the Climate Element?
 - What could the City do to improve your trust in it/them?
 - Have you felt distrust or a lack of transparency in any of your interactions with the City?
 - Are there current community equity efforts you know about that can be built upon for climate action?
 - Are there communities in the city you are particularly concerned about regarding climate change impacts? If so, who are those communities?
- **Response Summary:** Respondents shared a variety of perspectives related improved governance efforts in the future, including the importance of safe active and public transportation, protections against flooding, increased density and mixed-use zoning to reduce sprawl, protections for natural resources, clean water, housing affordability, tree canopy, solar panel installations, building electrification, transitioning to electric vehicles, increased City staff engagement with community members on these issues, and an emphasis on supporting vulnerable populations.

D. Public Comment

The City posted a draft of the Climate Element on its website for 30 days between January 2 and January 31, 2025, for public comment. This draft reflected public feedback and ideas submitted to date from a range of stakeholders and community members including city staff, external experts, the South Sound Asian Pacific Islander Coalition, the Thurston Climate Action Team, the Thurston Climate Mitigation Collaborative's Community Advisory Workgroup, and the CPAT made up of community members.

The City's online posting provided the opportunity for all community members and those who spend time in Tumwater to review the draft and share formal feedback for the City to further

improve the document. Community members shared feedback by completing an online feedback form or emailing the Comprehensive Plan team.

1) Summary of Responses

The City received 44 responses during the public comment period. These comments focused on a range of topics, summarized below. The City maintained a detailed log of comments, noting its response and the extent to which the comment was appropriate for integration into the final draft.

Effective Regulation

- Effective Regulation: Respondents shared the importance of streamlined municipal regulation that encourages and incentivizes behavior change.
- Effective Assessment and Monitoring: Respondents noted the value of assessing and comparing the effectiveness of municipal climate investments over time to encourage ongoing iteration and refinement of climate actions.

GHG Emissions Reduction

- Minimum Levels of Efficiency in Buildings: Respondents underscored the importance of building energy efficiency strategies, including baseline levels of efficiency in rental units, climate-resilient building standards and/or elements (e.g., south-facing roof orientation, cool roofs, living walls), and guidelines for sustainable deconstruction and materials salvage.
- Education and Outreach: Respondents highlighted how effective outreach and education with community members play a key role in emissions reduction.

Transportation and Mobility

- Improved Cycling Infrastructure: Respondents emphasized how improved cycling paths and trails not only makes traveling without a car easier but provides environmental and health benefits to community members.
- Vehicle Electrification: Respondents shared ideas for encouraging vehicle electrification community-wide, including incentivizing multifamily housing EV charging, EV car-sharing, and EV industry improvements and consumer protections.

Climate Adaptation and Resilience

- Tree Canopy: Respondents noted the benefits of sustained and increased tree canopy, particularly in canopy-poor areas like parking lots.

2) Community Organizations

City staff also reached out to more than sixty local agencies, non-profits, and community-based organizations inviting participation in the development and refinement of the Climate Element. Some responded to this request and either requested meetings or presentations to their organizations. Staff followed through to provide the engagement in the method requested. Comments from those organizations are included in the comment register included in this meeting packet.

City staff also participated in Community Assemblies organized by Thurston Climate Action Team (TCAT), including presenting at one. The notes from these Community Assemblies are still in process with TCAT staff.

3) Food Bank and Library Tabling

City staff also tabled multiple times at the Tumwater Mountainview Church satellite location of the Thurston County Food Bank and at the Tumwater Timberland Library. This varies in format from asking questions about what is important to people to asking people to pull actions from a hat and share their reactions or how the action might impact their lives.



City staff tabling efforts

This outreach was especially useful to ensure the goals and policies in the draft Climate Element were interpreted as intended and that the Climate Element would benefit all members of our community. For instance, a number of food bank clients live in campers, vans, or recreational vehicles and pointed out that they were left out of the buildings and energy actions. This was unintentional and because we received this feedback, staff added an action specifically to benefit residents of Tumwater who live in recreational vehicles or at campgrounds. Staff continued to ensure that any feedback requests were posted at local campground bulletin boards.

F. Incorporating Feedback

Most feedback that was within the City's jurisdiction to carry out and remained aligned with the state requirements of the Climate Element was incorporated. Many comments made about the Climate Element were most appropriate to be incorporated into other Elements, such as Land Use and Transportation, and were done so accordingly. Additionally, some comments made were related to other City planning work, such as the upcoming revision to the Tree and Vegetation Protection Ordinance (TMC 16.08), which will be incorporated into that project.

The comment register shows each comment made, city staff's response, and whether the feedback was incorporated or not.

3. Prioritization

Between February and July 2025, the CPAT was asked to define a framework to prioritize the many implementation actions in the draft Climate Element. They created the following categories, into which the draft implementation actions are categorized:

- **High Impact Climate Actions.** CPAT prioritized actions because they will drive the greatest amount of emissions reductions and/or reduce casualties due to climate hazards immediately or in the near term.
- **Easy Wins.** CPAT prioritized actions because they will be easier to accomplish, allowing the Tumwater community to feel motivated by real and visible progress.
- **Futureproofing for Everyone.** CPAT prioritized actions because they will help to untangle potential future conflicts and allow the City to create policies and legislate on the side of climate action.
- **Everyday concerns (equity).** CPAT prioritized action because they create a more equitable and just community immediately or in the near-term, addressing issues of economic injustice and making it possible for Tumwater's community members to access basic needs.
- **Building longevity.** CPAT prioritized action because they create a more equitable, just, and resilient community in the long term but require action now to build that future.

Staff will utilize the draft implementation action list (Appendix A), prioritizing those items prioritized in the list to develop annual work plans that will be approved by the City Council.

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

The State Department of Commerce has a webpage for Climate Element guidance.

<https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/growth-management/growth-management-topics/climate-change-2/>

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](#)