



**SKAGIT COUNTY 2025**  
Comprehensive Plan Update

# Public Engagement Summary

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LAST UPDATED January 27, 2024

Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.

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## Appendices

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## Furthering the Public Participation Program

This engagement document is intended to be a living document and will be updated throughout the 2025 Skagit County Comprehensive Plan update. In April 2024, Skagit County completed the public participation program for the Comprehensive Plan which outlines goals, strategies, and timelines of the project’s engagement. To review the public participation plan, visit the project website at [skagitcounty.net/2025CPA](https://skagitcounty.net/2025CPA).

### The public participation plan goals are:

- Commit to early and continuous engagement
- Broadly disseminate proposals and information in accessible formats
- Provide equitable opportunities for public participation in all areas of Skagit County
- Provide timely information at key milestones
- Use concise, plain, and easy to understand language
- Consult with local tribes
- Consult with neighboring jurisdictions, and federal and state agencies.
- Provide multilingual engagement opportunities and materials
- Update the project website with current information
- Utilize a variety of outreach mediums including local media, print, web, social media, emails, community meetings, and open houses

### Comprehensive Plan Process and Engagement Opportunities



The table above shows where community engagement opportunities run concurrent with project.

### Engagement Commitments

**Commit to inform** –Skagit County will keep the community well informed from start to finish.

**Commit to involve** – Skagit County will consult with specific stakeholders and make sure that their needs and concerns are reflected in the plan.

**Commit to collaborate** – Skagit County will gather advice and innovative ideas from the community and incorporate them into the plan’s decisions to the maximum extent possible.

**Commit to circle back** – Skagit County will share how feedback was used to demonstrate the importance of community engagement process.

**Commit to summarize our activities** – Skagit County will acknowledge people’s time and participation after each activity (surveys, interviews, community meetings, etc.). Skagit County

and the consultant team will summarize feedback by creating a community engagement summary that will be available on the project website.

**Commit to provide adequate public notice** – We will inform the public of opportunities to participate in a timely manner, at least a week in advance of a meeting or activity where feedback is sought.

## First Survey

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### Summary

In April to May 2024, Skagit County conducted an online public survey to gather feedback from the community. The goal was to identify the general community perception of the Skagit County's strengths and weaknesses, and determine key areas needing focus for the 2025 Comprehensive Plan periodic update cycle. This initiative was one of many strategies aimed to involve the community in shaping Skagit County's future direction by prioritizing areas of improvement efforts. The survey findings provide valuable insights for staff and policymakers. These results will be used to guide focus areas for policy or influence future engagement questions.

The survey was widely advertised across Skagit County's diverse networks, both online and in-person, to encourage maximum community participation. This included use of Skagit County's social media and utilizing the department's listserv. Long-range planners from Skagit County actively promoted the survey during public meetings and engaged with residents at various community events, including the Concrete Community Resources Fair on April 8, 2024 and Healthy Kids Day at Skagit YMCA on April 13, 2024. See Tabling section for information about these events. Additionally, the survey was distributed via email to individuals subscribed to Skagit County newsletter, as well as various stakeholder groups and advisory boards. The survey was open for five weeks from April 9, 2024 and closed on May 14, 2024 with 717 participants.

### Goals

Skagit County identified the following goals for the survey.

1. Identify broad priorities from Skagit County residents
2. Identify Skagit County's greatest strengths
3. Identify Skagit County's greatest weaknesses
4. Identify key topics for the Comprehensive Plan to focus on
5. Use the survey to advertise the start of the year-long project
6. Collect emails from interested residents to build a network for future input

Based on these goals, the survey was written to be short, quick, and easy to complete to collect the most responses from residents and invite participants to stay involved via email. As required by state law, community engagement for the Comprehensive Plan is meant to be continuous and the engagement opportunities were structured with the intent that all participants will have more opportunities to provide more detailed feedback.

### Survey Questions

Based on the approach and goals for the first community survey the following questions were used:

1. What values best describe Skagit County? Please rank your priorities. (1–highest; 8–lowest)
  - a. Family oriented
  - b. Stewardship of natural resources
  - c. Health and safety
  - d. Prosperity and opportunity
  - e. Diversity and community inclusion
  - f. Community cohesiveness
  - g. Financial sustainability
  - h. Equity
2. What are Skagit County’s greatest strengths? Pick two.
  - a. Housing supply and affordability
  - b. Local industry and employment
  - c. Environment (stewardship and water resources)
  - d. Environment (natural resource extraction)
  - e. Rural character
  - f. Public facilities and services (roads, parks, and community buildings)
  - g. Transportation options (bike, bus, car, and walking)
  - h. Community resilience and natural hazard mitigation
  - i. Healthy food access
  - j. Other (please specify)
3. What are Skagit County’s greatest weaknesses? Pick two.
  - a. Housing supply and affordability
  - b. Local industry and employment
  - c. Environment (stewardship and water resources)
  - d. Environment (natural resource extraction)
  - e. Rural character
  - f. Public facilities and services (roads, parks, and community buildings)
  - g. Transportation options (bike, bus, car, and walking)
  - h. Community resilience and natural hazard mitigation
  - i. Healthy food access
  - j. Other (please specify)
4. Skagit County is aiming to establish a vision to guide the Comprehensive Plan and for the County of the next 20 years. We want to know what is most important to you. What priorities do you feel are most important to focus on over the next 20 years? Please rank your priorities (1-highest; 6-lowest).
  - a. Preserving agricultural land
  - b. Community resilience and hazard mitigation
  - c. Transportation improvements
  - d. Improving housing supply and affordability
  - e. Economic growth and jobs
  - f. Environmental preservation

Questions 5-7 were demographic questions, analyzed on page 9.

## Results

The highest-ranking values were family oriented, stewardship of natural resources, and health and safety. The highest-ranking strengths were rural character, environment (stewardship and water resources), and healthy food access. The highest-ranking weaknesses were housing supply and affordability, transportation options, and local industry and employment. The full list of rankings for all options provided can be found in Appendix A.

<b>Highest-ranking Values</b>	<b>Family Oriented, Stewardship of Natural Resources, Health and Safety</b>
<b>Highest-ranking Strengths</b>	<b>Rural Character, Environment (Stewardship and Water Resources), Healthy Food Access</b>
<b>Highest-ranking Weaknesses</b>	<b>Housing Supply and Affordability, Transportation Options, Local Industry and Employment</b>

For the questions identifying strengths and weaknesses, a write-in option was provided. Write-in responses and complete survey questions can be found in the survey results included in Appendix A.

Respondents prioritized preserving agricultural land as the number one priority for Skagit County. This was also true when comparing the responses by the region and by age. The second-highest ranked priority from respondents was improving housing supply and affordability although when comparing the responses by region, region A’s second highest-ranked priority was environmental preservation and region C’s second highest-ranked priority was community resilience and hazard mitigation. Regardless of age, improving housing supply and affordability was ranked as the second highest priority.

<b>Question 4 Summarized: What priorities should Skagit County focus on over the next 20 years?</b>	
<b>#1</b>	<b>Preserving agricultural land</b>
<b>#2</b>	<b>Improving housing supply and affordability</b>
<b>#3</b>	<b>Environmental preservation</b>
<b>#4</b>	<b>Economic growth and jobs</b>
<b>#5</b>	<b>Community resilience and hazard mitigation</b>
<b>#6</b>	<b>Transportation improvements</b>

Respondents were asked to identify the region that they lived and worked in based on the map provided below.

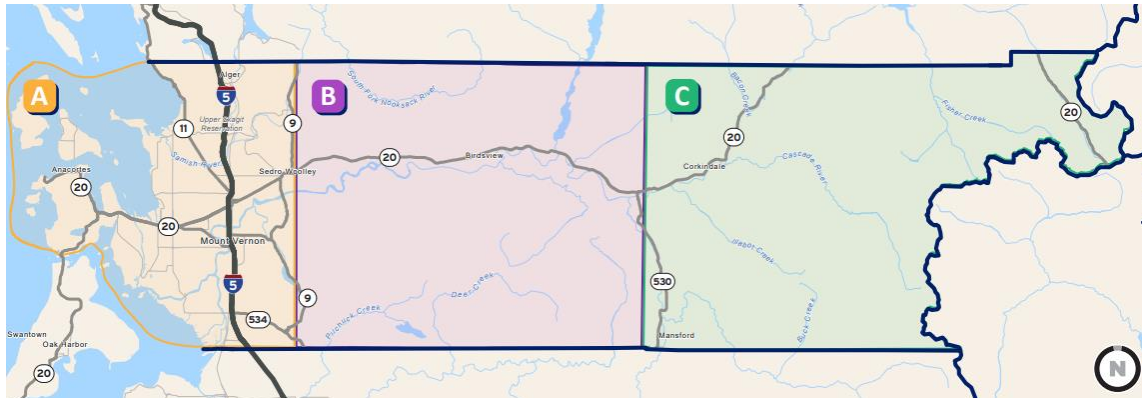


Figure 1 Map of Skagit County used to help determine where survey participants live.

Results were further analyzed by the region respondents lived and worked to identify local differences in survey responses. It was generally found that regardless of where respondents lived, priorities were similar.

- All three regions listed “preserving agricultural land” as the top priority.
- All three regions listed “economic growth and jobs” as the fourth priority.
- Region A listed “environmental preservation” the highest out of the three regions.
- Region B listed “improving housing supply and affordability” the highest out of the three regions.
- Region C listed “community resilience and hazard mitigation” the highest out of the three regions.

Question 4 Summarized by Region		
Region A Responses Ranked	Region B Responses Ranked	Region C Responses Ranked
1 Preserving agricultural land	1 Preserving agricultural land	1 Preserving agricultural land
2 Environmental preservation	2 Improving housing supply and affordability	2 Community resilience and hazard mitigation
3 Improving housing supply and affordability	3 Environmental preservation	3 Improving housing supply and affordability
4 Economic growth and jobs	4 Economic growth and jobs	4 Economic growth and jobs
5 Transportation improvements	5 Transportation improvements	5 Environmental preservation
6 Community resilience and hazard mitigation	6 Community resilience and hazard mitigation	6 Transportation improvements

## General Findings by Age

### Priorities of respondents ages 18-44:

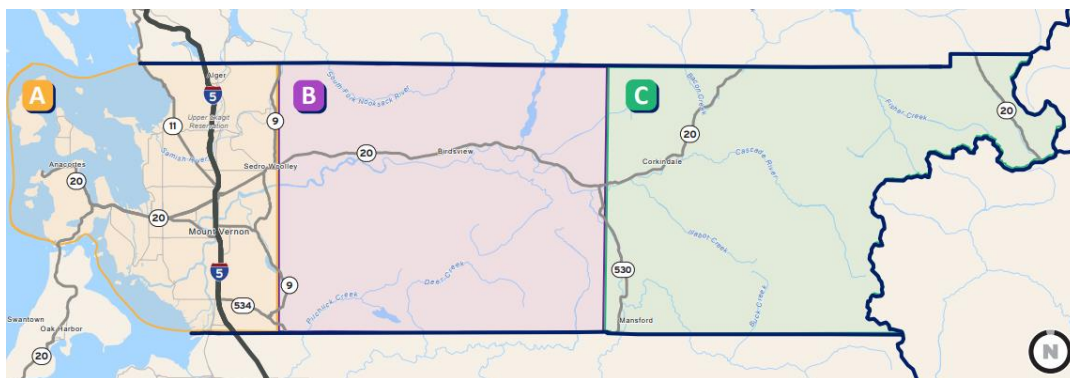
1. Preserving agricultural land
2. Improving housing and affordability
3. Environmental preservation
4. Economic growth and jobs
5. Community resilience and hazard mitigation
6. Transportation improvements

### Priorities of respondents ages 45-76 or older:

1. Preserving agricultural land
2. Improving housing and affordability
3. Environmental preservation
4. Community resilience and hazard mitigation
5. Economic growth and jobs
6. Transportation improvements



Survey Participants	
<b>93.58%</b>	Live in Skagit County
<b>76.15%</b>	Own property in Skagit County
<b>54.39%</b>	Work in Skagit County
<b>22.42%</b>	Own or operate a business in Skagit County
<b>1.95%</b>	Go to school in Skagit County
<b>1.26%</b>	Visitor of Skagit County





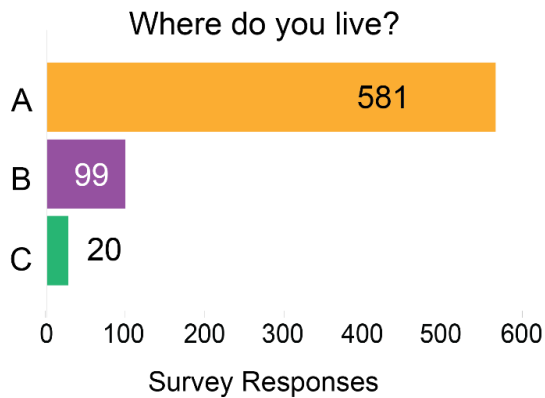


Figure 2 "Where do you live?"  
Demographic Question from Survey

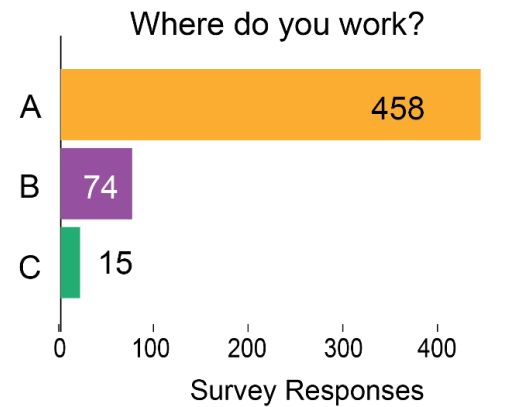
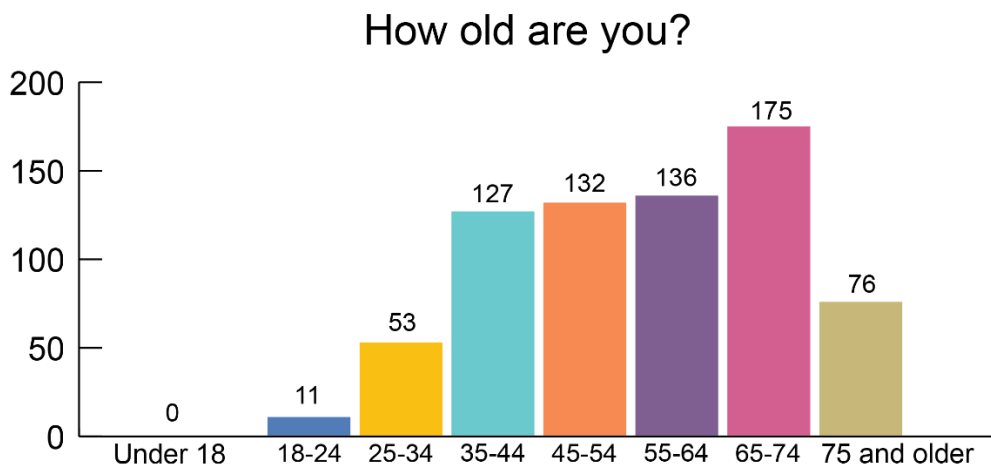


Figure 3 "Where do you work?"  
Demographic Question from Survey

A total of 581 participants live in Region A, around Mount Vernon, Burlington, Sedro-Woolley, and Anacortes. A total of 99 participants live in Region B, around Hamilton and Concrete. A total of 20 participants live east of Rockport. A total of 458 participants work in Region A around Mount Vernon, Burlington, Sedro-Woolley, and Anacortes. A total of 74 participants work in Region B, around Hamilton and Concrete. A total of 15 participants work east of Rockport.



The highest age groups that participated in the survey were between 65 to 74. The three highest age groups that participated in the survey were 35 to 44, 45 to 54, 55 to 64, and the lowest participating age groups were 18 to 24, 25 to 34, and 75 and older. No participants in the survey were under 18.

### Key Takeaways for the Comprehensive Plan

The results of this survey was one of the early outreach community engagement efforts utilized to identify groups selected for stakeholder interviews, discussed in the next section of this document. Because the top four priorities were preserving agricultural land, improving housing supply and affordability, environmental preservation, and economic growth and jobs stakeholder groups from these four areas were invited to discuss issues around these topics.

## Tabling Events

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### Summary

Between April to June 2024, Planning and Development Services (PDS) staff attended four community events to advertise the start of the project and notify residents of the opportunity to participate in the first community survey and information on how they can follow the project and provide input.

### Goals

The goal of the tabling events was to meet residents where they are, foster open conversations, and provide the opportunity to educate those that haven't yet participated in the planning process.

### Results

At these events, staff had open conversations with community members and collected valuable comments to consider before starting the plan drafting process. The comments are paraphrased from what was heard from the community. Direct quotes are in quotation marks.

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## TABLING EVENTS SNAPSHOT

### East Skagit County – Community Resource Fair

Location: Concrete Senior Center,  
45821 Railroad Ave., Concrete, WA 98327

Audience: East Skagit County residents

Date: Monday, April 8, 2024  
Time 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

### Healthy Kids Day – Community Resource Fair

Location: Skagit Valley YMCA,  
1901 Hoad Rd., Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Audience: Families and young children

Date: Saturday, April 21, 2024  
Time: 2:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

### Berry Dairy Days

Location: 520 E. Fairhaven Ave.,  
Burlington, WA 98233

Audience: Festival attendees  
Date: Saturday, June 15, 2024  
Time: 10:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

### Community Connect

Location: 17400 Cook Rd.,  
Burlington, WA 98233

Audience: Farm workers

Date: Saturday, June 29, 2024  
Time: 1:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.



Caption 2. PDS staff attending the East Skagit County Community Resource Fair

### **Comments from East Skagit County - Community Resource Fair**

*Comments within quotations are direct quotes, all other comments are paraphrased.*

Increased the transparency of available data with technological solutions. For example, King County provides a map of the as-builts for sewer/ water. This can help assist with development and avoid delays in construction by knowing where things are. - Community Member

*“Desperate need for transitional housing.”* - Volunteers of America staff

Improved transportation access. - Community member

*“More homes.”* - Community member

It can be difficult writing codes and regulations if you do not have the capacity or political buy-in to do so. Example provided was code enforcement of abandoned vehicles in rural areas around the Town of Concrete. The goals and objectives provided in plans and regulations need to be obtainable and realistic. Avoid lofty goals that will never be accomplished. - Concrete Planning Commissioner

There needs to be work within Skagit County to keep and elevate higher education within the region and provide more opportunities for locals to pursue their education without having to move or commute to educational institutions. Skagit Valley College is working to partner with organizations to assist students with internships and job opportunities within the County. - Skagit Valley College Outreach Staff

Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.



Caption 2. PDS staff and Kimley-Horn staff at the Healthy Kids Community Resources Fair

### Comments from Healthy Kids Day – Community Resource Fair

*Comments within quotations are direct quotes, all other comments are paraphrased.*

Transportation and ADA accessibility are lacking for public and commercial facilities. It is difficult for caregivers to transport their clients that are in wheelchairs and walking aids. - Community member and home health aide.

*“We need to support our ag community.”*

*“Affordable housing”*

*“It’s grown up too fast”*

There needs to be multifamily housing with on-site childcare. Transportation is a major challenge for families, especially those with children who have health issues and have to shuttle children between medical appointments and childcare facilities. It would be easier for families to consolidate these uses to reduce vehicle trips. - Community member and parent

More educational childcare facilities that provide services over the summer break. It is challenging for families with working parents to find quality childcare. Currently there are not enough opportunities throughout the County creating tight competition for registration. - Community member and parent

Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.



Caption 3. PDS staff at Berry Dairy Days

### **Comments from Berry Dairy Days**

*Comments within quotations are direct quotes, all other comments are paraphrased.*

Development needs to stay in the cities and the county needs to remain rural.

*“Housing is too expensive and hard to get. It’s hard for families with one income.”*

Better transportation is needed. There is now traffic on I-5 where there never used to be. Solutions are needed to encourage other forms of transportation besides relying on personal vehicles.

Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.



Caption 4. PDS staff at Community Connects Farmworker Event

### **Comments from Community Connect Farmworker Event**

*Comments are paraphrased.*

Childcare services are limited.

Bus routes to farms / agricultural bus routes

Rental contract lengths are too long. Temporary rental contracts should be 3 to 6 months, but most landlords require contracts that are greater than 6 months.

There is a need for assistance with farmworker minimum wage and childcare.

Need more services near homes, including bus routes.

Services are too expensive in the city. Childcare is too expensive, and most people cannot afford it. The minimum wage cannot support the cost of living.

Organizations to reach out to: Helping Hands, Welcome Home Skagit, Alternative Housing Alliance.

Lack of rental housing in the cities.

Families have been looking for suitable rental properties.

Services near transportation, it is difficult to travel by walking.

Streamlining permit timelines and processes.

Rent is too high with upfront costs. Provide more services near homes.

Seasonal worker housing availability. Too many restrictions on rental contracts.

### **Participants Summary**

Demographic data is not collected at tabling events to encourage participation from everyone. However, PDS staff did collect the general location of where residents lived in Skagit County as

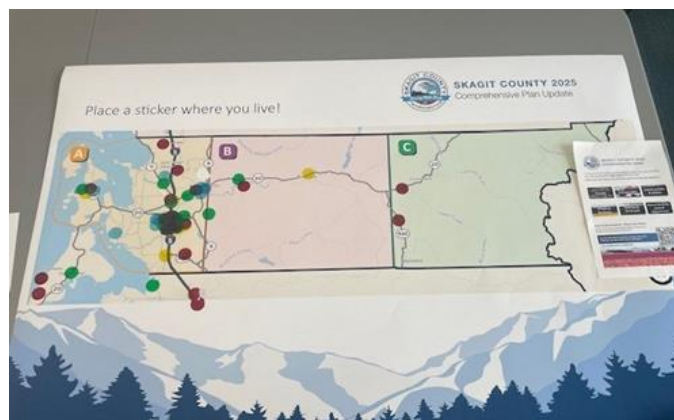
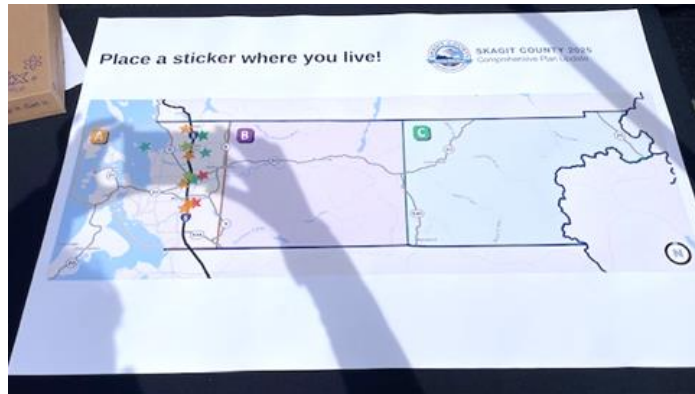
Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.

a tabling activity. Participants were asked to place a sticker where they live. The color of the stickers did not correlate to any data collected.

Generally, participants at the Healthy Kids Fair lived in Mount Vernon – Burlington area. A few participants lived in Anacortes, La Conner, Sedro-Woolley, and East Skagit County.

Participants at Berry Dairy Days were from various areas along I-5.

Caption 5. Map activity results at Berry Dairy Days



Caption 6. Map activity results at Healthy Kids Community Resources Fair

## First Stakeholder Interviews

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### Summary

Based on the first survey results which identified the top four priorities for Skagit County to focus on for the next 20 years, stakeholder groups focusing on agricultural, environmental, housing, and economic conditions in the community were invited to participate in early discussions before policy development.

The stakeholder interviews were completed in a series of online and in-person interviews between June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, and July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Overall, 8 stakeholder interviews were held and over 36 people attended the meetings.

The project team reached out to a wide range of stakeholders and attended several monthly meetings held by different groups to advertise the Comprehensive Plan and gauge interest in participating in interviews. From these discussions, the interviews were schedule with the following organizations:

#### Housing Focus

Skagit/Island Counties Builders Association  
Helping Hands Food Bank  
Skagit Habitat for Humanity

#### Agricultural Focus

Agricultural Advisory Board  
Skagit County Farmers  
Skagit County Drainage and Irrigation District Consortium

#### Environmental Focus

Marine Resource Committee  
Forestry Advisory Committee

#### Economic Focus

Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County

*Important note: more stakeholder interviews are proposed to be completed in September 2024 to specifically address new state requirements for climate change, resiliency, and greenhouse gas emissions reductions.*

Although the stakeholder interviews had four key focus areas based on the top priorities from the survey, the stakeholder interview questions were created to collect comments on several topics. All interviewees were provided the same questions ahead of the meeting. During the interview, the facilitator introduced the questions but allowed the interviewees to steer the conversation towards their primary concerns, ensuring the collection of the most valuable feedback This also helps the project team understand the areas of greatest importance to each group.

Comments said during the meeting were written down verbatim and assigned to an element in the Comprehensive Plan. See the sticky note boards in Appendix D.

### Goals

Skagit County identified the following goals for the first round of stakeholder interviews:

1. Collect detailed information about existing conditions in these topics (agriculture, housing, economic development, environmental).



2. Collect current progress made to improve conditions in these topics
3. Collect feedback on future policies or actions that could improve these topics

## Stakeholder Interview Results

### Agricultural Focus

#### ***Finding balance between preserving agricultural land and promoting economic opportunity.***

Farmers that participated in the stakeholder interviews had different views on the future of agricultural land based on the scale of the farming business. Farmers that operated large, historical farms generally prioritized preservation, keeping the existing policies as they are. Farmers that had relocated or established their business within the last 10 years expressed the desire to explore new options for economic diversity to keep up with costs.

- Interviewees expressed the desire to maintain agricultural land, property rights, and a strong agricultural industry for farmers in the area.
- Concerns about agricultural land turning into developable land to accommodate for growth as a result of pressures from outside development companies buying ag land and changing the farmland forever. There is no way a local farmer can keep up with outside investments.
- Another reoccurring concern shared was using agritourism. It creates the opportunity educate people about local farming and can help diversify farming income. The other point shared is that it can negatively impact resource lands by taking land out of production.
- Policies are needed to retain operators in the county and support first generation farmers.

#### ***Provide housing, services, and transportation for agricultural workers.***

- Concern about housing for agricultural workers, cost of living, and paying fair wages. The ability to pay workers a living wage cannot keep off with the cost of living, particularly rent, in the County.
- Providing incentives for accessory dwelling units (ADUs) that could provide affordable rental spaces.
- Alternative solutions needed, for example, have Community oriented housing, centralized shared green space
- Remote jobs are impacting and increasing growth, placing added development pressure on resource lands in need of larger regional transportation networks in and out of the County.
- Ensuring future growth aligns with transit plans locally and regionally.
- Using roundabouts as a traffic management tool.
- Ensuring sufficient access at choke points on the roads.

#### ***Finding balance between preserving agricultural land and creating opportunities for growth/housing.***

Multiple interviewees were concerned about increasing impervious surfaces to accommodate growth. This has a large impact on water runoff and stormwater. Interviewees mentioned promoting infill development and prioritizing developing in existing city centers to relieve current pressure to develop rural lands.

- Build affordable housing that already has impervious surfaces and that is ripe for redevelopment. No addition of impervious surface or conversion of farmland.
- Keep multifamily housing near transit lines and social services to limit VMT.

### ***Finding balance between preserving agricultural land and environmental preservation.***

Multiple interviewees mentioned that some strategies to combat climate change or promote environmental preservation can be a hindrance to the agriculture industry. One common issue brought several times was critical areas.

- Ensuring maps are accurate and updated frequently.
- Potentially integrating a natural resources plan with climate change plan.

### ***Improving capital facilities and infrastructure to build a resilient agricultural industry that can withstand potential impacts from climate change.***

- *“Without drainage, flood control, and irrigation agricultural would not happen and we need to invest in infrastructure for protection against climate change.”*
- Making sure prioritizing infrastructure improvements isn’t being misaligned with agricultural improvements.
- Identify how to get irrigation water to the natural resource lands. The delta cannot sustain anymore impervious surfaces, this is becoming a problem. Limit surface water or bolster stormwater code.
- Infrastructure is needed for value added agriculture; storing, cooling, barns, packaging etc. High costs can push out smaller farms.
- Concern around contained communities and the inability for those roads to be maintained.
- Planning for future growth within schools.

### ***Climate/Hazard Mitigation for Agricultural Focus***

Generally, interviewees expressed concern about the protection of agricultural lands when faced with potential hazards, especially hazards from climate change. Conversations focused on emergency management, like evacuation routes, communication, and protection of lands should hazards occur.

- Needing to think about long term management of the marine dike
- Concern about water availability/security; how valuable is agricultural land without water?
- Concerns about potential policies making farming activities more expensive and less viable.
- The Comprehensive Plan should take a holistic approach to climate change.
- The current levees are only 50-year levees which is not ideal flood protection. But there are no policies that promote the creation of 100-year levees.
- The hazard mitigation plans and the flood plans from the County could bolster the district or levees, or they could harm the districts if the goals are not in alignment.
- Concern around food security.
- Is the County prepared for evacuation and communication in the rural areas? How can this be paired with the Hazard Mitigation Plan?

### **Environmental Focus**

**Ensuring industry and environmental and natural resource protection are addressed concurrently.**

- Continuing to support the Forestry Advisory Board to demonstrate commitment to natural resource preservation
- Interviewees made mention of the Shoreline Master Program (SMP) and potentially integrating it with stormwater management plans. Interviewees want Skagit County to be a leader in shoreline stabilization, green infrastructure, and water restoration and management.
- Equitable access to waterfronts was mentioned. This comment also relates to climate change and resiliency.

**Finding balance between preserving agricultural land and creating opportunities for growth/housing.**

- *“Transitioning from agricultural land to developable land is having huge impacts on resources, water, and inundation.”*

**Providing housing and transportation options for all types of families and demographics in the County.**

- Ensuring schools are keeping up with growth
- Impact of remote jobs and the disparity between long term residents and new residents and how that will impact gentrification
- Ensure housing accommodates multi-generational living
- Cost and value of land being too high to develop.
- Part of creating equity in a community is thinking of transportation and growing concurrently and ensuring multiple modes of transportation.
- It is very challenging for natural resource - based business to recruit and retain workforce since their employees have difficulty and are often unable to find housing near employment.
- *“There should be an emphasis on interconnected community through walking and biking.”*

**Ensure existing infrastructure is maintained.**

- Multiple interviewees mentioned that bridges need to be assessed and updated to maintain existing levels of forest management.
- Multiple interviewees mentioned that exiting infrastructure, like roads through federal lands, are not being maintained by property owners or agencies. These roads have historically provided support to the forest industry and management of forestry lands. *“Once it’s gone it’s a large problem for future timber industries to grow.”*
- Discussion around Public Works projects helping protect the shoreline, preserve water, and prevent pollution of natural resources

**Climate/Hazard Mitigation**

- Multiple interviewees were concerned about sea-level rise.
- Coastal restoration and preservation is a concern especially with stress from development.

- Common concerns are landslides, erosion, overland flow, inundation, and alluvial floodplains.
- Illegal dumping on forest resource lands is a significant challenge to forestry groups for the cost to dispose garbage, abandoned appliances/ vehicles and the possible environmental damage from hazardous materials.
- Understanding limitations in growth and the capacity to preserve.
- Communities around the river could be impacted in the predominant rain.
- *“Effects on cultural resources due to climate change is another element that should be considered in preserving.”*

### **Economic Development**

- Supporting businesses in areas people live to ensure living wages
- Keep and retain waterfront and water-based businesses.

### **Housing and Building Focus**

#### ***Increase affordable and accessible housing options for all residents in Skagit County.***

- Interviewees made mention of needing to close the gap from shelters to long term housing and allow for more options between the two.
- Providing housing options for senior citizens and multigenerational households. Seniors may have challenges aging in their homes with increased maintenance costs while receiving a limited fixed income. There are people who “have a home without lights or water but they have nowhere to go. They cannot live in their homes, but they have nowhere to go.”
- Decreasing the difficulties around the permitting process
- Interviewees agreed that ADUs should be explored as additional housing options

#### ***Finding balance between preserving agricultural land and creating opportunities for growth/housing.***

- Interviewees expressed several concerns about finding available and affordable land for new housing projects and several barriers to construction.
- Building permit processes are not transparent and can often have unpredictable timelines.
- Locating appropriate land for new housing projects has been difficult.
- *“Once land around the UGA [urban growth area] gets approved to be farmland it creates a barrier to ever allowing any new housing or UGA expansion.”*

#### ***Integrate transportation and housing planning between the County, cities, and agencies, like Skagit Transit.***

- Barriers to transit in Skagit County are the scattered amounts of densities and communities, which makes it difficult to increase number of bus stops and make an interconnected system.
- Consider transit-oriented development and build near existing transportation hubs for better opportunities for expansion.
- Challenges on east county with transportation. Affordable housing has to go with it and services.

***Finding balance between increasing housing stock and environmental and agricultural preservation.***

- Balancing development with preservation of natural resources and farmland
- Educating developers on buffers within critical areas so they understand the full capabilities of critical areas.

***Capital Facilities/Utilities***

- Ensuring water availability

***Increase the number of programs and policies to protect housing stock from potential climate impacts and climate related hazards.***

- *“In Marblemount there is a huge worry about fire. There is a large area of low-income populations and people are reliant on the food bank in these areas.”*
- Hamilton areas deal with floods regularly. The food bank and other services help move people and haul off debris.
- *“Example 25 people living in trailers that had to move in Hamilton from floods and were not able to move back from landlord.”*
- Mobile homes are susceptible to mold and other unhealthy living conditions.
- Concerns about wildfire
- Solar and electric should be promoted and incentivized by the County. Including planning around transitioning houses to alternative energy.
- The County should consider possibilities and impacts if outages occur.

***Economic Focus***

***Ensure economic development is orderly and comprehensive.***

- A lot of work was done with public health, especially during the pandemic. It’s crucial that Skagit County understands the importance of public health and the impacts it has on the economy.
- Skagit County Leadership works across disciplines. It’s important that help is received in order to move issues forward and come to a solution. It can be easy to get stuck before taking any action; “we have the tendency to admire the problem for a long long long time before diving in and working on issue.”
- People tend to criticize if it doesn’t fit every element of the issue. They are multifaceted and cannot be solved with one solution, but a solution can help. There do not need to be competing concerns.
- *“The growth of Skagit County is not nearly as large as other counties. It is not explosive growth; it is incremental growth. There is a want to prioritize the economy by ensuring that people can both work and live within the County.”*

***Rural/Agricultural***

- Developable land is hard to find for expanding businesses or housing especially in rural areas.
- Currently, farmers are having a hard time making a living with the land that they own. Support value added agricultural and ancillary activities. The County is heavily protecting

farmland, concern that is overprotection prohibits people from making a living on land. Surgical approach to managing uses.

### ***Provide housing for all families and populations.***

Interviewees mentioned there is a need for greater diversity in housing options. Provide options for all family sizes, incomes, and abilities. The most common types of housing discussed were transitional housing, shelters, smaller units (one-two bedrooms).

- Need more multi-family and rental properties for younger populations.
- Concerted effort around new housing projects being close to work centers.
- Housing options near population and work centers rather than on farmland or floodplains.
- Needing to accept more density to preserve the beauty of the landscape in Skagit County.
- It is difficult for families to encourage their kids to grow up and live within Skagit County due to housing price points.
- More entry-level housing is necessary
- Need to reduce costs for the builders and find a way for the public sector to share the risk and cost.
- The Skagit Housing Consortium encourages group conversation.
- Matha's Place is a model for addressing homelessness, but it does not address the issue of workforce housing. We need a range of housing projects that specifically targets different housing problems.
- Potential for housing in unincorporated areas of Skagit County

### ***Create connections between housing, services, and transportation.***

- Connecting people to where they work and where they recreate should be prioritized.
- Connecting the train to the bus is what people want. Taking people off the roads and using different modes of transportation. This way support is given to the lower-income populations that cannot afford a car, maintenance, gas etc.
- Transportation is an equity issue for the lower income population. In addition to the environmental benefits, we want to make sure that people can get to and from work.
- Childcare can be a major challenge for individuals when trying to enter or rejoin the workforce.

### ***Capital Facilities/Utilities***

- Broadband is much better than it used to be but could still be improved for businesses and homes. It is important to extend outside of the urban cores.
- A pressing issue within Skagit County is power. Limited electric power discourages industrial consumers. This will need to be addressed in the near future, such as new substation.

### ***Hazard Mitigation***

- Ensuring businesses in rural areas get hazard relief.
- Natural hazards exasperated by climate change impacts. For example; cold snaps- crop failure, pipes bursting. Businesses upriver are disproportionately affected per capita as are home based businesses.

## Potential Actions Mentioned

Throughout the interviews, participants mentioned potential County actions. These actions were collected and assembled into a general list to present as part of the community engagement data although their inclusion in this engagement report does not guarantee they will be adopted in the Comprehensive Plan as is.

These have been paraphrased to clarify the context from the conversation.

- The County should consider how to work with diking districts or irrigation districts when developing land use policies to continue farming activities.
- Engage companies that assist farmers in their business operations.
- Ensuring the County can make the permitting process easier for affordable housing construction for Habitat for Humanity projects.
- Ways to incentivize smaller housing types in limited areas of more intensive rural development (LAMIRDs) for first time home buyers or for seniors that don't need large houses or can't live in them.
- Develop incentives for smaller housing types, reduce the permit process timeline for homes built for affordable housing, multifamily tax incentives and density incentives for low-income units, create opportunities for seniors to downsize.
- Incentivizing cottage ordinances and small lot subdivisions for duplexes.
- Demonstration programs can help incubate housing types and show the community new and innovative ways to create nontraditional housing types.
- Address bridges that need to be updated for the capital facilities plan.
- Ensuring coordination with the Department of Emergency Management (DEM) and the hazard mitigation plan and community wildfire protection plan.
- Educating the public on the importance of natural resource programs in the County: tax benefits, open space benefits, revenue, and jobs
- Explain how the forest industry will be promoted but still be able to mitigate climate in certain ways and emphasize fuel reduction more than carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) capture.
- Consider how to balance the tension between limiting infrastructure in rural areas and developing growth.
- Write policies to bolster the ability to apply for funding, especially for green infrastructure and road projects.
- Skagit County should make a vulnerability map of properties with the most concerning hazards.
- The Comprehensive Plan should be done in such a way that it's respectful of tribes and treaty rights and acknowledges this to avoid any future issues.
- Is there potential for a transfer of development rights program?
- The County should encourage and support this resiliency groups that are forming in the County. Consult with Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) and Public Works on this effort.
- The Shoreline Master Plan (SMP) should be proactive in responding to climate.

## June 2024 Open Houses

### Summary

Skagit County hosted three open houses early in the project before drafting goals and policy revisions to the Comprehensive Plan. These were hosted at the end of June in Anacortes, Sedro-Woolley, and Concrete. The open houses were scheduled in these locations to provide opportunities to participate in-person in West, Central, and East Skagit County.

A future open house is tentatively scheduled for early October and will be hosted in Mount Vernon.

The meeting format was self-guided with no formal presentation. Participants could arrive anytime between 5:30 and 7:00 and walk through a collection of poster boards that educated participants on state requirements and engaged participants to provide feedback. The topics covered at the open houses were land use/rural, housing, capital facilities, transportation, climate change and resiliency.

### Goals

1. Educate the public about the new state requirements specific to this periodic update.
2. Ensure residents are aware of the new element regarding climate change with two sub elements for resiliency and greenhouse gas emissions reductions.
3. Collect community feedback specific to the Comprehensive Plan elements that will help guide the preliminary policy revisions presented between July and October 2024.

## OPEN HOUSE SNAPSHOT

### Attendance

More than 100 people attended open houses at three different locations in Skagit County. The open house that received the highest attendance was hosted at the Sedro-Woolley Community Center with over 60 attendees.

### Comments Collected

Over 400 comments were collected across all open houses. The comments collected identified issues or opportunities related to rural character, housing, transportation, climate, and resiliency.

### Locations

Anacortes Depot Arts & Community Center  
Thursday, June 20th  
5:30PM-7:00PM  
611 R Ave.  
Anacortes, WA

Sedro-Woolley Community Center  
Wednesday, June 26th  
5:30PM-7:00PM  
703 Pacific St.  
Sedro-Woolley, WA

Concrete High School  
Thursday, June 27th  
5:30PM-7:00PM  
7830 S Superior Ave.  
Concrete, WA



Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.



Caption 37. Open House Attendees at the Anacortes Depot Arts & Community Center

## Results

### What does rural character mean to you?

The comments focus on preserving rural and natural environments while managing urban growth. Key points include:

- **Habitat Protection:** Emphasis on creating and maintaining habitats for a variety of wildlife such as eagles, ospreys, and seals, and preserving natural areas like forests, wetlands, and rivers for their ecological functions, including carbon sequestration.
- **Rural Character and Preservation:** A strong desire to maintain rural character by protecting open spaces, farmland, and natural landscapes from urban sprawl and non-agricultural development. Rural areas should remain sparsely populated with limited development, focusing on agriculture and conservation.
- **Sustainable Development:** Advocacy for sustainable farming practices, reduced density in rural areas, and the importance of green spaces, parks, and scenic beauty. Some comments suggest implementing clustered housing with significant open space and integrating new climate solutions like biochar.
- **Regulation and Zoning:** Calls for updating zoning laws to balance housing needs with the preservation of natural lands. Some advocate for stricter regulations to prevent farm conversion to residential use and non-commercial exploitation of natural areas.
- **Community and Quality of Life:** A vision of a close-knit community with minimal governmental intrusion, emphasizing a connection to nature, quiet environments, and less traffic. There is also concern about the impact of pesticides and the need for transparency about their use.
- **Balanced Growth:** A need to manage population growth by concentrating development in urban areas and preserving rural areas for agriculture, natural habitats, and low-density living.
- **Public Safety and Resources:** Acknowledgment of the need for resources to address issues such as rural homelessness and ensuring public safety while maintaining the rural lifestyle.

Overall, the comments reflect a commitment to environmental stewardship, sustainable living, and thoughtful urban planning to protect and preserve rural landscapes and natural habitats.

### What housing issues are you seeing in Skagit County?

The comments highlight pressing issues related to housing affordability, density, and planning, with a strong focus on balancing development with the preservation of natural areas and community needs. Key themes include:

- **Affordable Housing:** There is a critical need for more affordable housing options, particularly for low-income and essential workers. Concerns include rising rents, insufficient low-income housing, and long waitlists. Many advocate for mandating affordable units in new developments and exploring alternative housing models like tiny homes and ADUs.

- **Housing Density and Development:** Support for increasing housing density in urban areas to prevent sprawl and better utilize existing infrastructure. Calls to restrict or eliminate short-term rentals (e.g., Airbnb) to free up housing for residents and avoid mega-mansions in favor of more modest, varied housing types.
- **Public Transit and Green Space:** Emphasis on integrating housing with public transit and ensuring access to green spaces. This includes the need for new housing to be near transit, groceries, and parks to promote livability and reduce traffic congestion.
- **Preservation and Regulation:** Advocates for protecting rural lands and natural resources from excessive development. There are suggestions for stricter regulations on ADUs to maintain neighborhood aesthetics and avoid environmental degradation.
- **Senior and Special Needs Housing:** Acknowledgment of the growing need for senior housing and accessible living options. Concerns about seniors losing their homes due to rising costs and a lack of affordable, single-level housing options are prominent.
- **Development Policies:** Calls for better zoning regulations, streamlined permitting processes, and incentives for green and sustainable building practices. Some propose revisiting existing policies to enhance housing affordability and ensure that new developments include necessary amenities and services.
- **Community and Quality of Life:** Desire to maintain a high quality of life with adequate public services, green spaces, and community facilities. There is also a focus on creating diverse, mixed-income neighborhoods to avoid socio-economic segregation.

Overall, the comments reflect a desire to address housing challenges through increased density, better regulation, and strategic development while safeguarding natural resources and ensuring community well-being.

**What improvements or additions would you like to see in our community's public facilities, such as sidewalks, parks, sewer, water systems, or other government services, to better meet the needs of residents now and in the future?**

The comments reflect a strong desire for improved infrastructure and transportation options, with a focus on safety, accessibility, and environmental sustainability. Key points include:

- **Infrastructure Improvements:** There is a significant push for developing more sidewalks, bike lanes, and multi-use trails to enhance safety and encourage walking and cycling. Specific requests include separated motor, bike, and pedestrian routes, better sidewalks in high-traffic areas, and improved bike trails connecting cities. Concerns about current infrastructure include broken sidewalks, inadequate bike paths, and unsafe conditions for pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Public Transportation:** Many advocate for expanded and more efficient public transit options, including shelters at bus stops, increased stops in various areas, and better connections to parks and community spaces. Suggestions also include electric taxis and improved services for remote areas like Marble Mount.
- **Climate and Environmental Concerns:** There is a call for transportation planning that addresses climate impacts such as sea-level rise, increased flooding, and drought. This

includes developing plans for road maintenance and improvements in vulnerable areas and integrating green infrastructure to mitigate these effects.

- **Community Amenities:** Suggestions for new and improved community spaces include additional parks, trails, and recreational facilities like community pools and fairgrounds. There is also interest in creating spaces for mental and physical health care clinics and centralized facilities for social services.
- **Water Management:** Concerns about water supply and conservation are highlighted, with recommendations for better water monitoring, floodwater storage, and alternative water systems. There is also a call for protecting water intake sources and using sustainable practices like composting toilets and grey water systems.
- **Safety and Accessibility:** Emphasis on making transportation routes safer and more accessible, particularly for pedestrians, cyclists, and individuals with disabilities. This includes creating safer crosswalks, marked school zones, and improving transportation infrastructure to accommodate various needs.
- **Educational Facilities:** Addressing overcrowding in schools is a concern, with calls for more schools and resources to improve educational opportunities.
- **Recycling and Waste Management:** Requests for improved recycling pick-up services and waste management, including better handling of recycling and more options for composting.

Overall, the comments advocate for a comprehensive approach to transportation and infrastructure planning that considers safety, environmental impact, community needs, and accessibility.

### **What should we do about climate change in Skagit County?**

The comments highlight a range of suggestions and concerns regarding climate change, environmental protection, and community planning:

- **Climate Action and Resilience:** There expressed interest to integrate climate change considerations into the SMP and the Growth Management Act (GMA) Plan. Comments stress the need for open discussion about climate impacts and increased efforts to build community resilience. Creating a Conservation Advisory Committee and a Climate Citizen’s Advisory Committee is recommended to advocate for environmental protection and climate resilience.
- **Sustainable Energy and Transportation:** There is support for transitioning to non-fossil fuel energy sources and expanding renewable energy, including solar and hydroelectric power. Suggestions include increasing gasoline taxes, offering local incentives for solar installations, and promoting electric vehicles and public transportation. The need for electric vehicle charging stations and improvements in bike trails and public transit are also emphasized.
- **Environmental Protection and Restoration:** Many comments advocate for enhancing environmental conservation efforts. This includes planting more native trees, protecting forests, improving the water quality of lakes and rivers, and reducing pollution. There is a

call to stop clearcutting without replanting and to avoid hard armoring of shorelines, which can exacerbate erosion.

- **Community Planning and Development:** Recommendations include focusing on developing walkable, livable communities with good public transit and bike connectivity. There's a push for zoning changes to support commercial composting and better land management practices. Additionally, there is support for housing initiatives that cater to various income levels and for educational workshops on climate change and conservation.
- **Consultation and Involvement:** Comments stress the importance of consulting with local scientific experts, such as the Skagit Climate Science Consortium, and involving Tribal knowledge and perspectives in planning and decision-making processes.
- **Miscellaneous Concerns:** Some comments express skepticism about the extent of human impact on climate change and advocate against specific initiatives, such as Initiative 2117. Others suggest practical actions for individuals, such as reducing water and energy use.

Overall, the comments reflect a desire for proactive, science-based approaches to environmental protection and climate action, with a focus on sustainability, community resilience, and comprehensive planning.

### **What actions do you think Skagit County government should prioritize to enhance its preparedness and resiliency to changing climate?**

The comments emphasize a range of priorities and actions for addressing climate change, environmental protection, and community planning:

- **Shoreline Management and Flood Protection:** There is a strong call to update the SMP to include considerations for sea level rise and avoid using hard armoring, which exacerbates erosion. Comments mention the need for collaboration with science-related communities and experts for climate related issues.
- **Development and Land Use:** Many comments advocate against further development in flood plains and areas prone to sea level rise. There's support for avoiding development on landslide-prone slopes and high-risk areas. Suggestions include focusing new growth in urban areas and avoiding urban development in flood plains. Land conservation should be prioritized alongside agricultural and forestry considerations.
- **Climate Action and Energy:** The need for a rapid transition to renewable energy sources, including solar, wind, and geothermal, is emphasized. Comments suggest increasing electrification and reducing fossil fuel use. There's also a call to support community solar projects, consider small-scale nuclear plants as a bridge fuel, and incentivize homeowners to switch to native plants and trees.
- **Disaster Preparedness and Resilience:** Recommendations include improving disaster preparedness, such as ensuring functional bridges and planning for extreme weather events. Educational workshops on climate change and conservation are suggested to help communities prepare for issues like wildfires and extreme temperatures.

- **Environmental and Community Health:** Comments highlight the importance of preserving green spaces, improving water quality, and managing forest lands. There is support for better land management, protecting water sources, and addressing pollution.
- **Education and Policy:** There is a call for creating and updating comprehensive climate action frameworks and plans. This includes forming an Environmental and Sustainability Committee and implementing educational workshops for climate change and nature conservation. Leadership should focus on informing the public about climate policy and the importance of taking action.
- **Community Involvement and Equity:** Ensuring that climate action and environmental policies address inequities and are responsive to lower-income communities is a key concern. Consulting with local tribes and integrating their knowledge and solutions is also advocated.

Overall, the comments reflect a broad consensus on the need for science-based, proactive measures to address climate change, protect natural resources, and enhance community resilience.

### What climate impacts are you most concerned about?

The comments provided reflect a wide range of concerns about the environment, economy, health, and community. Several comments mentioned concerns with a loss of quality of life from heightened wildfire activity, smoke, heat, and drought. There are also significant concerns about shoreline erosion and landslides, alongside the challenges in managing shorelines effectively.

- **Water Supply:** reduced snowpack melt in the summer leading to decreased in-stream flows. Flooding and tree loss are critical concerns, emphasizing that the cost of inaction will be much higher than taking preventive measures now.
- **Air Quality and Pollution:** Comments also focus on greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, and declining air quality. The health consequences of heat and smoke are severe, affecting air quality and increasing disease rates. Reducing reliance on coal or oil trains to cut air pollution, fires, and explosions are suggested. Concerns about pollution from cars and component manufacturing.
- **Sea-Level Rise:** Comments express the need for effective responses to sea level rise, including saltwater intrusion, and tidal marshlands, as well as flooding.
- **Heat:** There is a strong emphasis on the loss of biodiversity, with pollution from greenhouse gases exacerbating this issue. The heat dome phenomenon, wildfire smoke, loss of trees, and drought are seen as interconnected problems, leading to heat, flooding, and wildfires. The extreme cold and winter weather in some areas, combined with inadequate shelter or housing, further compound these issues. Planting more trees and protecting animals are suggested as important measures.
- **Biodiversity Degradation and Loss:** Concerns about degradation of ecosystems will increase the vulnerability to climate related hazards. Loss of tree cover/canopy can lead to an increase in heat. Loss of vegetation can lead to increased landslides. Loss of wetlands can lead to further problems with flooding and sea level rise. Changes in plant and animal phenologies, such as altered food sources during bird migration and reproductive failures, are worrying.

Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.

- **Wildfire and Smoke:** Comments address several impacts from wildfires including environmental degradation and smoke. Local wildfire hazards are a significant threat, and fires have been known to devastate wetlands. The loss of trees and vegetation due to wildfires is mentioned frequently. The agricultural sector is also suffering, with fires and extreme heat displacing wildlife and causing a loss of bird species.

Overall, these comments reflect a comprehensive concern for the multifaceted impacts of climate change on various aspects of life, urging for immediate and thoughtful action to mitigate these effects.

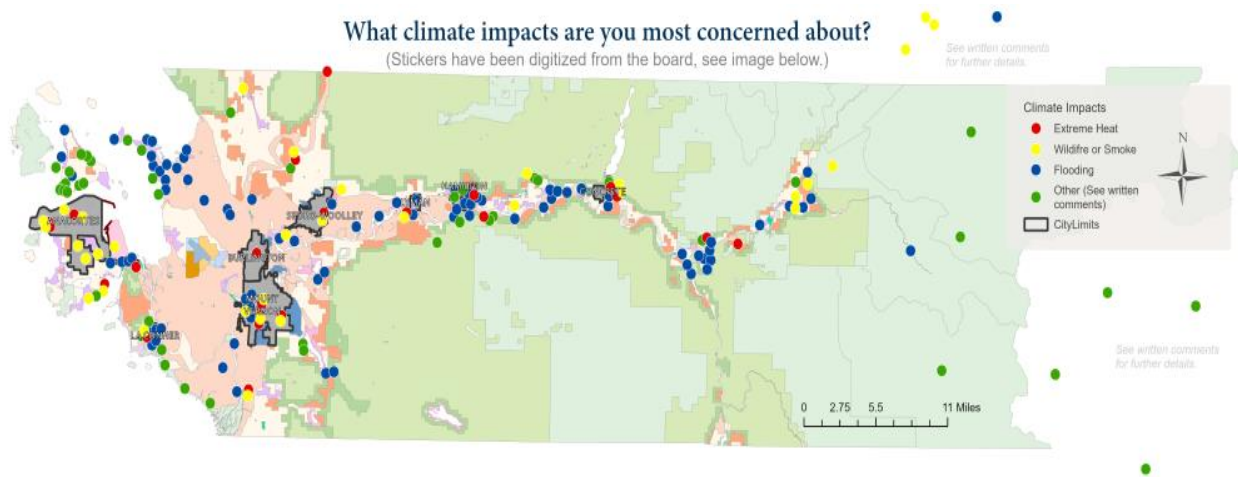


Figure 4 "What climate impacts are you most concerned about?" Map Activity Results from June Open Houses. See Appendix G for larger version.

At the open houses, attendees were invited to participate in a map activity asking them to put stickers around Skagit County identifying climate impacts they were most concerned about. Red dots are areas where attendees have experienced extreme heat. Yellow dots are areas where attendees have experienced wildfire or smoke. Blue dots are areas where attendees have experienced flooding. Green dots represent some other climate impacts further discussed in the comments above. A larger map to view the dots in greater detail is provided in Appendix G.

The highest concentrations of dots identifying flooding are clustered around La Conner, Hamilton, Concrete, Rockport, and other areas along the Skagit River.

The highest concentrations of dots identifying wildfire or smoke are clustered around developed areas, typically cities. This is most likely identifying that participants were concerned about impacts from smoke where they live.

The highest concentrations of dots identifying extreme heat are clustered around cities.

## **Summary of Participant Data.**

At all open houses, participants were given the option to submit demographic data. Demographic data helps ensure input is collected from all community members and helps assess further community engagement strategies.

Almost 25% of survey responses came from participants living in the 98221 ZIP code which is the City of Anacortes and Guemes Island. The second most participants, boasting over 20%, came from the ZIP code 98284 which is the City of Sedro Woolley, Town of Hamiton and the surrounding area.

Women made up 54% of the participants in this survey, 40% of respondents were men, and 6% preferred not to say.

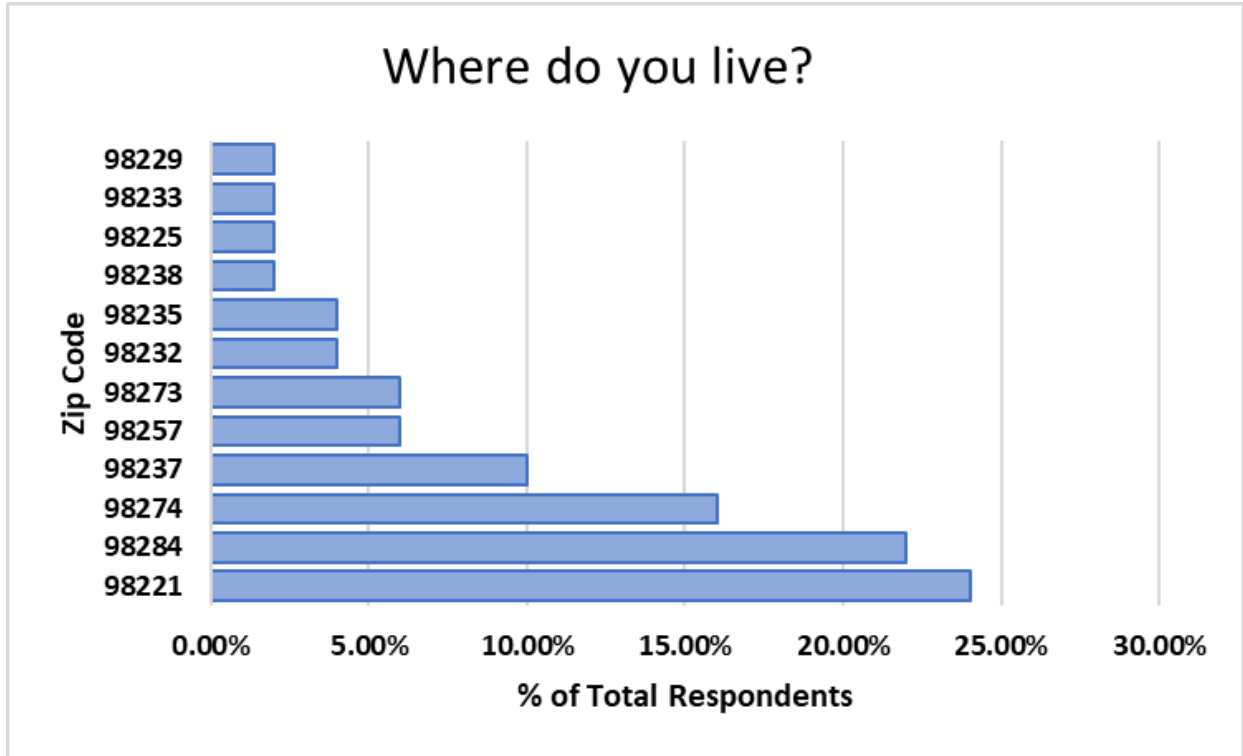
The majority (86%) of respondents in Skagit County self-identified as White or Caucasian. Following that was those who identified as multiracial (4%). Black or African American and Other both accounted for 2% of the survey population.

When asked what decade the participants were born in, about 33% stated that they were born between the years 1950 and 1959. The next largest group of respondents stated that they were born before 1950. The survey saw the least engagement with individuals who were born after the year 2000.

Participants that stated they had achieved an advanced degree made up 42% of the survey and 29% of respondents stated that they have earned a 4-year degree. A total of 15% of participants identified that they had completed some college or a 2-year degree and 2% had stated that they are a high school graduate.

Out of the 52 participants, 31 of them responded to the survey at the Sedro-Woolley Open House. At the Anacortes Open House there were 13 participants. Concrete Open House saw the lowest number of participants with 8.



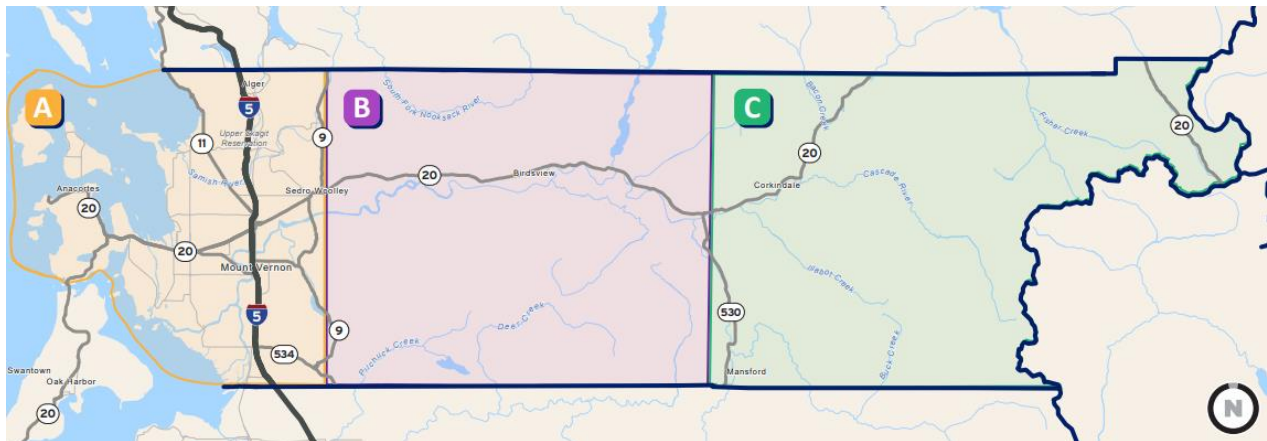


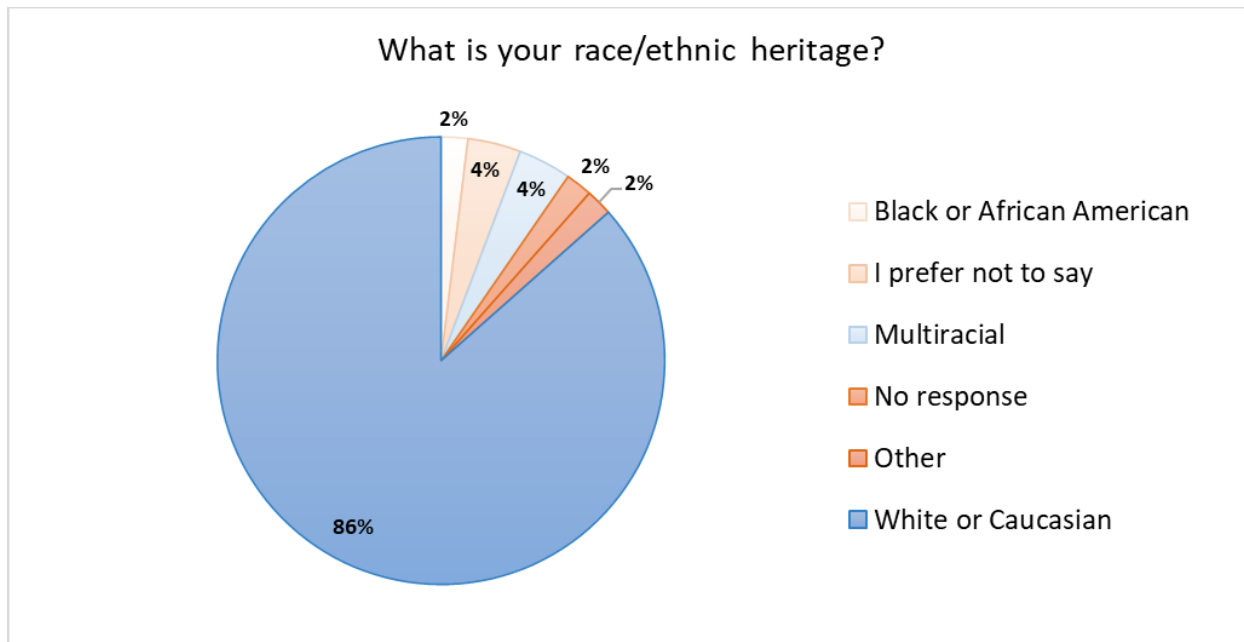
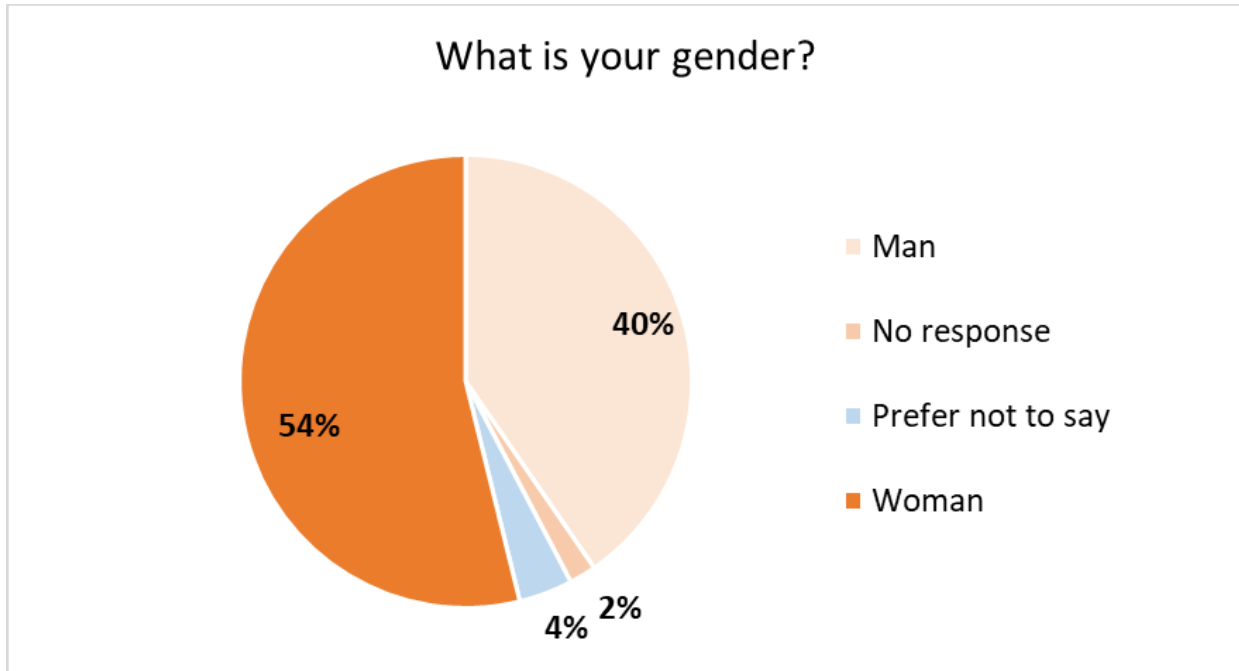
Region A Zip Codes: 98221 (Anacortes), 98284 (Sedro-Woolley), 98273 & 98274 (Mount Vernon), 98232 (Bow), 98233 (Burlington), 98235 (Clearlake), 98238 (Conway), 98257 (La Conner),

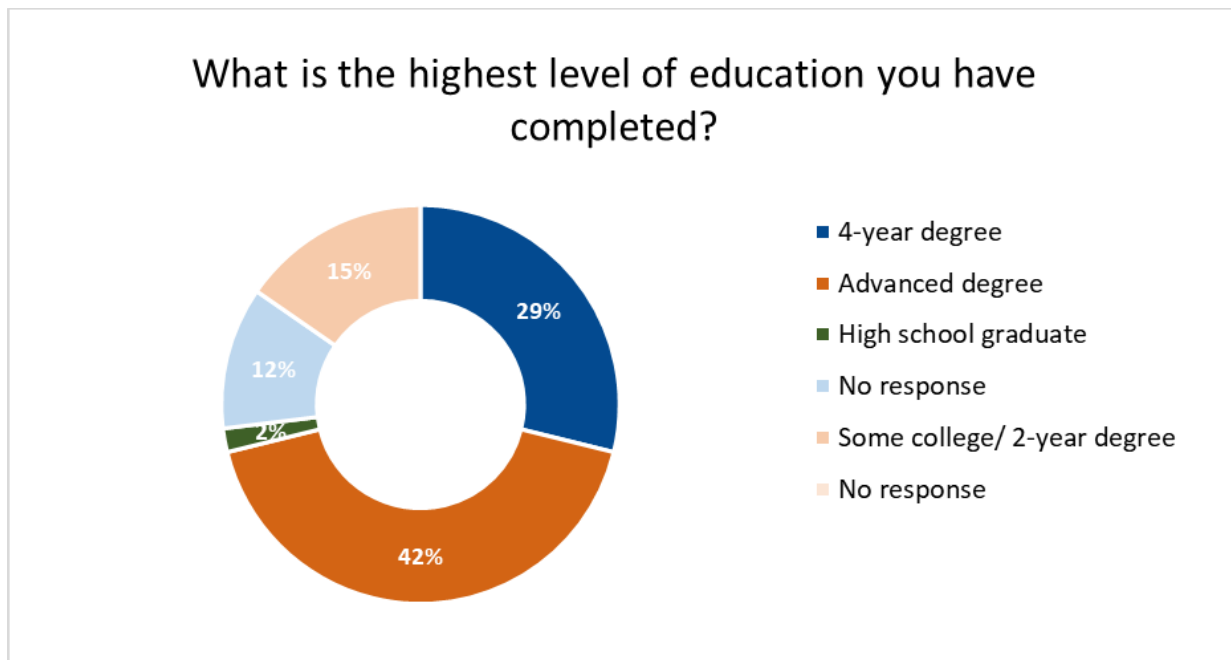
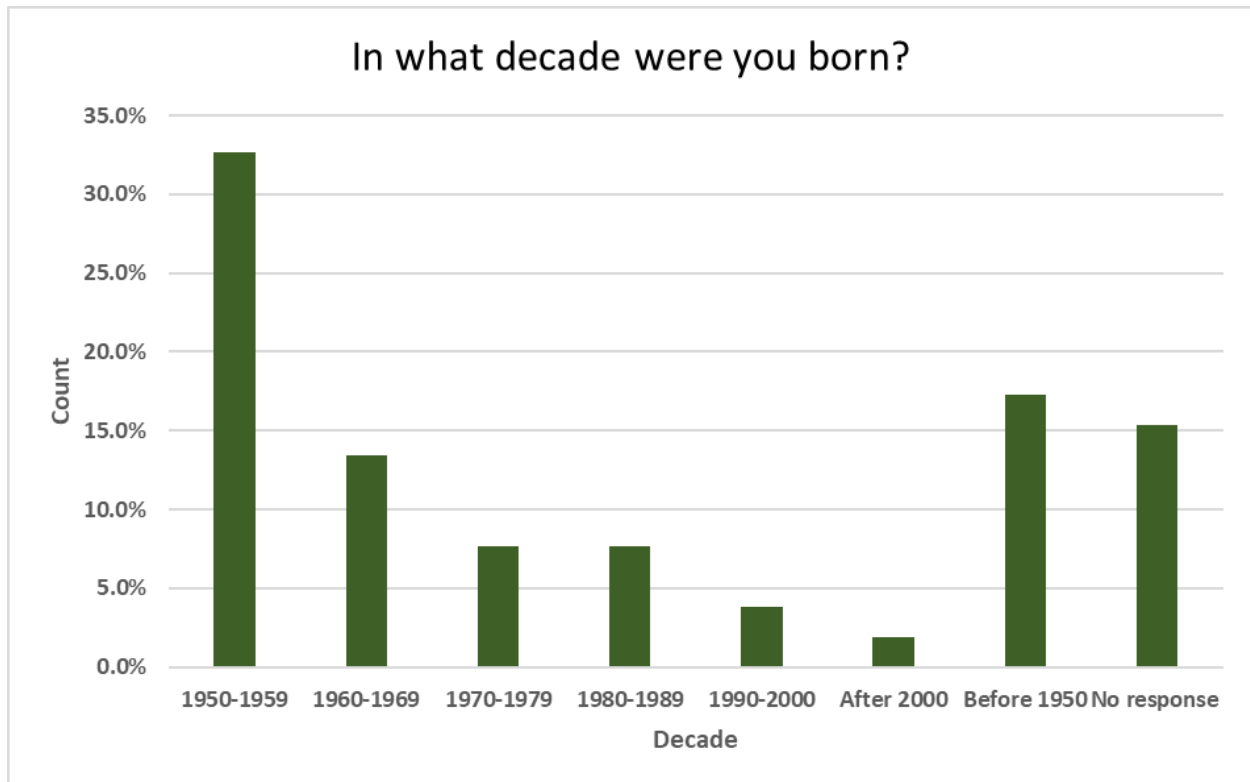
Region B Zip Codes: 98284 (Hamilton and Lyman)

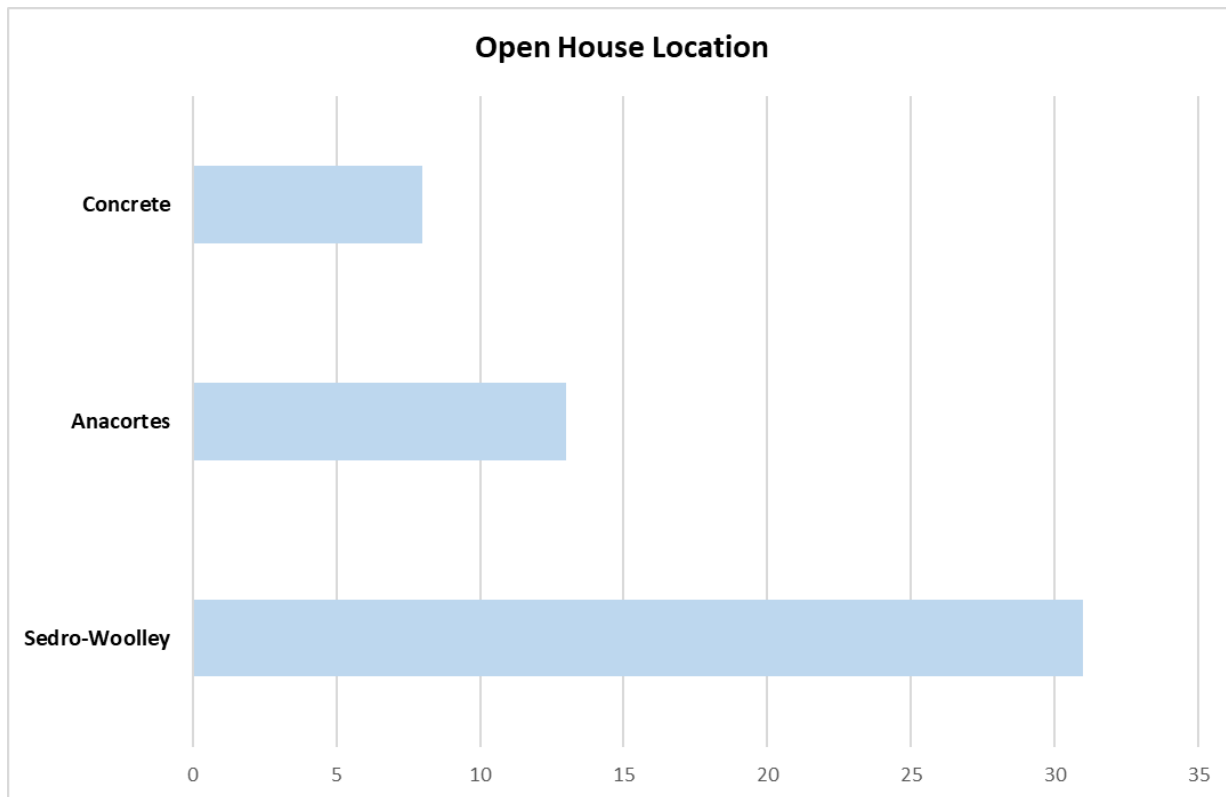
Region C Zip Codes: 98237 (Concrete)

Other Zip Codes: 98229 & 98225 (Bellingham)









## Other Comments Received Prior to July 2026

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Throughout the project, PDS staff receives comments about the Comprehensive Plan through written comments and email. These comments are recorded in this report for review by the public, Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners. Comments have been copied and pasted or re-typed as submitted to PDS staff expect where typos or formatting issues occurred.

Emailed to staff on June 26, 2024, by Puget Sound Energy

Dear Jack Moore,

On behalf of Puget Sound Energy (PSE), I am reaching out to convey our thoughts for your consideration as part of the periodic update to the comprehensive plan and development regulations under the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), specifically Chapters 36.70A and 43.21C. The attached spreadsheet contains suggested language as it relates to customer programs and our shared climate goals. In the attached, you will find 7 tabs grouped by category. At PSE, we recognize that climate change is one of the biggest existential threats facing our planet today. As one of the largest producers of renewable energy in the Pacific Northwest, PSE has been an early leader in addressing climate change and investing billions in renewable resources and energy efficiency for homes and businesses. Now, PSE is on the path to meet the current and future needs of its customers and to deliver on the requirements to decarbonize operations and serve its customers and communities equitably. This transition is unprecedented in terms of the magnitude of the change and the accelerated time frame in which it must be achieved. By working together, we can successfully drive towards our

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shared clean energy goals. PSE looks forward to providing input as the comprehensive plan items are discussed in more detail. Together, we can reduce emissions and keep energy safe, reliable, and affordable.

Thank you,

Emailed to staff on June 25, 2024, by Gena DiLabio.

Dear Senior Planners,

Please do not use farmland or forests in update. Provide for more parks for recreational use. Please protect wetlands, Puget Sound, salmon streams and the Skagit River.

Provide for the health and safety of those people who live and work in the planning area. Coordinate water systems and preserve as much open space as possible. Scientists warn us that the climate is changing rapidly because of fossil fuel use, please keep this in mind as you plan for the future.

Thank you for considering my input.

Sincerely,

Written comments submitted to staff on July 16, 2024, by Puget Sound Partnership. This was a formal letter

Dear Skagit County Board of Commissioners,

On behalf of the Puget Sound Partnership's (PSP) Ecosystem Coordination Board (ECB), we submit this letter with respect to your jurisdiction's current periodic update process, and associated updates to development regulations. The Puget Sound Partnership's Ecosystem Coordination Board supports the Leadership Council in carrying out its duties, including the development and implementation of the Action Agenda. The ECB is made up of 33 members, representing local, state, federal, and tribal governments, environmental and business interests. This broad representation supports the ECB to provide cross-caucus reporting and dialogue on priority issues, such as how to ensure the protection and restoration of habitat for ecologically sustainable watersheds for the future of all species through local periodic updates. This letter provides background on the priorities described in the Action Agenda and the resources available to support Comprehensive Plans and Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) amendments to align with those priorities. While this letter does not respond to materials produced as part of your comprehensive plan update, it does offer many specific recommendations and resources that will support the protection and recovery of the Puget Sound.

The recovery of Puget Sound is vital to human wellbeing in the region, to sustain threatened salmon, orcas, and numerous other species, and to preserve Puget Sound's ecosystem functions and values for current and future generations. But the Puget Sound ecosystem is under increasing threats from the development of ecologically important habitats, forests, farmlands, and other working lands, especially outside of urban growth areas. The smart growth strategy in the 2022-2026 Action Agenda identifies a key opportunity to "improve the implementation of the Growth Management Act within local jurisdictions land use planning and decisions, and across jurisdictions to include the protection of natural areas and working lands."

New planning requirements, updated science, and learning from the past ~8 years of Growth Management Act (GMA) implementation make this round of Comprehensive Plan updates a critical juncture and inspiring opportunity in our region's collective work to recover Puget Sound. As you know, the Comprehensive Plan sets the stage for development activities and decisions which all have an impact on how well we achieve our goals to protect and restore Puget Sound. To support recovery of the Puget Sound, we recommend that jurisdictions in the Puget Sound region make use of the many science-based resources available to support development of Comprehensive Plan and CAO amendments that protect natural areas and working lands.

Our collective understanding of the complex relationships between land cover, development, and ecosystem health improves over time, and this is why cities and counties must include current, best available science and information in their local land use planning amendments during the periodic update. Fortunately, our state Departments of Fish and Wildlife, Ecology, Natural Resources, and Commerce have been busy updating and distributing science-based guidance to support local governments in this process. Cities and counties should leverage these resources below, and other science-based resources, to effectively amend their Comprehensive Plans and Critical Areas Ordinances:

- Local Integrating Organizations (LIOs) and LIO Ecosystem Recovery Plans
- Local Salmon Recovery Watershed Chapters
- Department of Fish and Wildlife's current Priority Habitats and Species Information
  - Riparian Management Zone Checklist for Critical Areas Ordinances
- Ecology's Wetland Guidance for Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) Updates
- Ecology's Climate Resilience and Shoreline Management webpage
- Commerce's Critical Areas Handbook and Checklist

To ensure smart growth in the Puget Sound region, the ECB recommends that jurisdictions consider and take action on the following:

- 1) **At key points in the Comprehensive Plan update process, review and apply the Sound Choices Implementation Checklist.** The checklist was developed by the Puget Sound recovery community and is intended to help local jurisdictions make updates to their comprehensive plans that align with Puget Sound recovery strategies and actions.
- 2) **Ensure your local planning department takes advantage of funding for additional staff resources to incorporate salmon and Puget Sound recovery into local planning by applying for the Salmon Recovery through Local Planning Grant Program.** Depending on funding availability, Washington State Department of Commerce will hold a fall 2024 round of funding. For more information contact [angela.sanfilippo@commerce.wa.gov](mailto:angela.sanfilippo@commerce.wa.gov).
- 3) **Understand how your local land use decisions will support region-wide efforts to achieve positive trends in Regional Land Use Indicators.** The Puget Sound Partnership assesses the status and trends of threats through a set of regional land use

indicators. Jurisdiction specific trend data for your county is available in the attached appendix.

4) **Reach out to and involve local experts in Puget Sound recovery** including Local Integrating Organization members, Salmon Recovery Lead Entities, as well as your local representatives on the Ecosystem Coordination Board, Ron Wesen, County Commissioner and Bill Blake. For additional support in facilitating connections with local experts please reach out to [Laura.Rivas@psp.wa.gov](mailto:Laura.Rivas@psp.wa.gov).

As you help shape the future of Skagit County at this pivotal moment in time, the ECB requests that you take advantage of the valuable tools and resources included in this letter to ensure we are doing all we can to support our local communities and Puget Sound recovery. Thank you for considering our recommendations, tools, and resources.

Sincerely,

Written comments submitted on June 26, 2024, by Joan Stamm.

Dear Tara and Robby,

Thank you for hosting tonight's community meeting in Sedro Woolley. I learned a lot about various community needs and issues. Although I attended to specifically address preserving the Eaglemont Golf Course land as a pristine wilderness and wildlife corridor, I now understand that I need to take my concerns primarily to the City of Mount Vernon. However, since the Eaglemont lands border unincorporated County lands, including the Eaglemont land, county involvement in including these lands into your Open Space Plans would seem to be relevant. Please consider. As a member of the Skagit Land Trust, the Washington Native Plant Society, the Xerces Society and a working member of Skagit Master Gardeners, I would like to see a more sustainable and ecologically balanced approach to all land in Skagit County. Some ideas include:

1. Incentivizing homeowners to remove all or some of their turf lawn (as some counties already do) to be planted with native trees, shrubs and wildflowers. This would provide more wildlife habitat, sequester more carbon, encourage pollinators, contribute to biodiversity and address water conservation.
2. Encourage public schools, community centers, government buildings, and libraries to plant trees and native plants, to install solar panels and to compost food and yard waste.
3. Preserve open spaces, forests, meadows, and farmland for future generations.
4. Incentivize buying electric powered lawn mowers and leaf blowers to reduce carbon emissions, or switching, where feasible, to rakes, brooms & push mowers.
5. Reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides, herbicides and insecticides on County controlled land in order to preserve pollinators and to reduce air and water contamination.

The County has great potential in reducing carbon emissions, water and air pollution, habitat loss, and species extinction. Government regulations are needed to create a healthier ecosystem. I hope you will use your power and influence to do just that.

Best regards,

Emailed comment submitted on June 25, 2024, by Morgan Randall.

Protect and plant more trees.

The more trees we have, i.e. the more trees we plant and the more trees we save, the less impact there will be in our county from global hearing. It is as complex and as simple as that.

Thank you for your consideration.

Email comments submitted on June 28, 2024, by Betty Carteret representing Citizens Climate Education Washington Chapter.

Tara and Robby,

I was very nice meeting you at the Comprehensive Plan meeting in Sedro Woolley. I was the one with the typed comments on the shipping labels that I left with Robby (that I have attached again here). As a little background, I am a mechanical engineer retired from the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in the Tri Cities. Since retiring in 2005, I have been focused on climate change education and outreach and have taught classes and give countless presentations in the area on climate change and the transition to clean energy and electrification.

I am currently the lead for the Skagit Chapter of Citizens Climate Education, a national organization with over 500 chapters in the US. We have a small, active chapter of people working on climate change outreach in Skagit County that is solutions oriented. I am personally working on educating people about building efficiency and electrification, but I am also very concerned about water issues in Skagit County driven by climate change. I believe there is a great opportunity to find integrated solutions to the current and projected increases of flooding and drought in our county. I personally urge that you include in your climate resilience element a study to identify the best options to store floodwater from the Skagit River (reservoirs, underground storage, aquifer recharge – or others) that can be drawn on during summer months for agricultural irrigation, residential and business use, as well as for salmon recovery and recreation. The solution(s) are going to be big projects and costly, so it is important that the county get started now on this as part of our resilience work and take advantage of funding available for such work through the Dept. of Commerce and the Climate Commitment Act. There are several other areas that I'd like to discuss as the planning process unfolds.

I also encourage you to establish a climate advisory team that can help with the planning process and bring in perspectives from residents, local nonprofits, community leaders and trusted voices for key stakeholder groups. This is recommended in Section 2 of the State GMA Climate Element guidance prepared by the Department of Commerce. Skagit County is lucky to have our own local experts on climate change, the Skagit Climate Science Consortium, as well as several nonprofits committed to this area that could provide representatives to support such a team. Our organization would be happy to appoint a representative to work with you and we are collaborating also with the Skagit Clean Energy Alliance another group that might be interested in participating.

Thanks for hosting the informative session on July 26th and I look forward to continuing to connect with you as the process continues.



Water Management: projected flooding and drought due to climate change present an opportunity to develop joint solutions when you look at this as managing water to store excess for times of drought. Skagit County should evaluate options for developing large water storage capacity that can be drawn down during summer months to support agricultural

irrigation, residential and business usage, tourism/water sports, and also as a resource for wildfire suppression and to recharge aquifers.

Water management – start planning on developing new infrastructure for water storage from flooding early to enable time for thorough analysis, planning, and seeking funding to pay for such large infrastructure projects. Identify needs for revenue from grants, state programs, and possibly funding from residents of the county through appropriate measures (fees, taxes etc).

This needs to be a priority.

Reduce GHG Emissions through electrification: Electrification of residential, rental, and business properties can make a major contribution towards reducing emissions in Skagit. There are organizations in the County that can help with this such as the Skagit Clean Energy Association and Skagit Citizens' Climate Education (I am local chapter lead). Provide free mentors or coaches who can get people started with planning and refer to experts.

Look for ways that Skagit County can participate and benefit from building out of the electrical grid. This is happening to meet the increased electricity demands and could be an opportunity for the County.

Evaluate and streamline county planning requirements, permitting and regulations to support transition to electric vehicles, home HVAC, and other residential and business electrification efforts.

Find ways to make mass transit more attractive to a larger segment of the population. Find out what limits people's use of buses and find ways to improve the barriers. Improve bike travel on county roads. Look to work done in other communities to provide bike trails both for recreation and for transit. Consider increasing bike lanes and other safety measures.

Look for ways for Skagit County to use funding resources available from both the State (Dept. of Commerce) and Federal Government that are available through the WA Climate Commitment Act, US Infrastructure and Inflation Reduction Acts. These funds are available now and can help the county with funds for planning, education, and infrastructure development.

Develop programs in partnership with the state and PSE to educate homeowners, renters, landlords and businesses on the benefits of energy efficiency and electrification to achieving goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. There are many resources to help with this and local groups that can help such as our chapter of Citizens' Climate Education.

Review permitting for residential and business building and look to limit development in areas that are vulnerable to flooding, sea level rise, and wildfires.

Look at strategies for retreating from hazardous areas on the coast versus increasing shoreline armoring that impacts marine habitat and species.

Because the PNW will see less impacts of climate change we can expect large population growth in coming decades due to climate migration. We need to be planning ahead on how to manage this growth while protecting our critical farmland, which will be even more

important as other areas such as California and Midwest are impacted harder by climate change.

Population growth in future will need to be managed by looking at urban growth and identifying ways to site housing and transit to limit the need for car travel. Avoid concepts of Fully Contained Communities that drive increased GHG from car emissions.

Develop public education campaigns on the projected impacts of climate change in Skagit County but include education on what individuals, businesses, and visitors can do to reduce their carbon footprint including residential electrification; transition to EVs; supporting county and other programs that work for this.

Educate county employees on the plans and goals for the climate actions included in the new Comp Plan to increase support and participation. Create incentives that could get people excited about their work and efforts.

Educate public on funding available to help them transition to electric appliances, HVAC, EVs, and other items. This will help increase participation and reduce GHG emissions.

Educate landlords and large property developers about goals to reduce emissions through efficiency and electrification. Create goals to reduce emissions from large residential units (apartments etc.) and support things like solar panels, weatherization etc.

Look for programs already developed in other counties and cities that can be replicated in Skagit County.

Form a Climate Policy Advisory Team including representatives of local organizations, citizens, community leaders (especially in lower income communities).

Email comments submitted on June 27, 2024, by Rosann Wuebbels.

Hello, I couldn't make the Anacortes open house but have some suggestions. Revise development regulations relating to land use, natural resources lands, rural character, and environment, to ensure they are compliant with new state laws and reflect our community's priorities. My priority is to keep our farmland, open space and forestlands from development. Any development belongs in the city boundaries. Develop goals and policies to encourage housing affordable to all income levels. Update transportation plans to support future road improvements and additional modes of transportation. Make our towns easier and safer to get around via bikes and walking. Create a community more resilient to climate exacerbated hazards and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Emailed comment submitted on June 27, 2024, by Kimberlei Rawson.

Dear Ms. Satushek,

Thank you for offering opportunities to learn about the Comprehensive Plan Update 2025 at the Berry Dairy Days and subsequent Open Houses. I have been a resident of

Skagit County since 1995, and have lived in the Prairie, Cedardale areas. I have also lived in Colorado and Arizona. I am an educator, teaching mathematics and the performing arts for 31 years, and I have performed locally at McIntyre Hall and other venues in a variety of ensembles. My family has a background in agriculture, and I am aware that Skagit County has historically provided an extremely important role in seeds and products that feed the world. While we may be challenged to roll back the paving over of our rich farmland, we can do much to protect what is left. In an effort to address several of the items on the posters for the Open Houses, here are my “sticky note” responses to some of those questions:

Transportation: Hooray for the 90x and 80x and all the bus services in our area! My son was able to attend EvCC and also gain weekend access to return from UW because of your services. Thank you! If we could increase service in smaller vehicles to allow for connections (or more frequent connections) to Stanwood, Arlington, and Smokey Point, that would help get more of us commuters out of our single-occupant vehicles. Greater outreach with organizing van pools could be helpful. Smaller vehicles with more frequency could help facilitate greater ridership throughout our region between Mount Vernon/Burlington, Sedro-Woolley, and Anacortes. This would also help with agricultural tourism.

We are hoping for high-speed rail to be available in Bellingham or other nearby city so we can access Vancouver, BC, Seattle, and Portland to reduce our carbon footprint and improve transportation efficiency. In the meantime, increased frequency of Amtrak service would be helpful.

Locally, we need something like the monorail (gondola over rivers) to get us off I5 and the Skagit River Bridges, with frequent local vans to get everyone where they need to go. Sidewalks and Lime bikes, electric 3-wheel bikes for older folks, etc. could help. The major road corridors need to be utilized for through-traffic. We need to plan now for the big increase in population, BEFORE it becomes so expensive to retrofit. A monorail would be easier and less expensive than light rail because you can put it overhead in many existing roadways.

Climate: See above. See Housing below. Frequently-available public transportation is key. We can expect a large influx of climate refugees from our neighbors in more southern states.

Climate Concerns: We need to ban public fireworks altogether due to fire risk (more of a policy issue, I realize.)

Flooding: We should re-visit the idea of using the Nookachamps area to store excess water during the 500-yr flood events, compensating land owners there and having a plan in place to evacuate farm animals. This would serve to protect the proposed infrastructure needed to address transportation, housing, and the business core of the county.

Housing/Rural Character/Justice: We need to increase density in our cities through multi-use zoning. Farmland and forest are rural; in towns and cities we need to encourage at least 4-story buildings (more stories would be better in certain areas) near public transportation hubs that feature restaurants, retail, grocery, and services so residents don't have to travel far to get what they need (leading to reduced greenhouse

emissions). Increased education and permitting of ADU's would be helpful as well. By increasing the supply of housing in our area, we bring down the cost of living, thereby providing more access and a more just society for those with lower incomes. I hear the concerns of people who say they do not want the character of our towns to change. The reality, however, is that the population is going to grow dramatically, and we can recognize the importance of preserving farmland because we humans can go up, while there is only a set amount of fertile land for feeding everyone. Yes, science can improve yields, but those increases in yields will need to be used for the increase in population. This also affects food justice, keeping healthy food available close to home and available for many others in our country and indeed, around the world (seeds).

Justice/Climate/Housing: Along with increasing density and expanding public transportation, we need to reduce the requirements for parking lots. We should consider reclaiming some of our vast parking lots and return some patches to community gardens, planting more trees and reducing temperatures. For starters, we should pursue efforts to build multi-story retail plus housing units at the mostly-vacant Cascade Mall.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my comments.

Written comments submitted on July 11, 2024, by the Skagit Land Trust.

### **Recommendation for The Board of County Commissioners to Create an Environmental Advisory Board.**

#### **Reason for this recommendation**

Although 2023 Washington state legislation requires that local comprehensive plans include specific goals and policies for climate change preparedness, response, and recovery, Skagit County does not have a committee or board to advise and make recommendations on all of the foundational elements of these issues. Our county needs an environmental board focused on Skagit County's open space and natural lands that would also provide input on plans critical to climate change adaptation and carbon emissions reduction.

Natural ecosystems are all of a piece. They work together to regulate our climate, lock away carbon, clean and store the water we drink, provide adequate habitat for native fish and wildlife to adapt, slow and alleviate flooding, control storm water and filter pollutants, create natural beaches protecting communities, help deter invasive species, protect biodiversity, and allow people from all communities to connect with nature in healthy, low carbon ways.

None of our commissioner-appointed advisory boards associated in any way with the environment is charged with looking at Skagit County's natural lands from a holistic point of view. The Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB) and Forest Advisory Board (FAB) have a commercial interests' focus. The County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board focuses largely on the recreational aspects of lands within the county parks system. The Marine Resources Committee is concerned principally with science, monitoring, education and restoration projects and does not play as advisory board role.

Critical area regulations do not cover the significant need the county has to identify and plan for conservation and restoration of a broad range of interconnected natural lands and environments, especially their critical role in climate adaptation and mitigation.

The County needs an environmental board with a diverse membership to evaluate Skagit County's natural lands and related policies through a variety of lenses, including social justice, biological and ecological sciences, climate science, and sustainability concepts to help the commissioners and the County make balanced decisions about the totality of our natural world and the people who inhabit it.

### **Proposed Primary Role and Duties**

**The Environmental Advisory Board reports to and makes recommendations to the Skagit County Board of Commissioners and Planning Agency on natural resource and environmental plans, policies and programs including, but not limited to:**

- A.** Existing and proposed legislation affecting natural lands, open space, waters and wildlife habitat of Skagit County
- B.** Land uses as they impact the long-term sustainability of natural processes (river process, marine shoreline, etc.)
- C.** Ways to maintain, enhance, collaborate on, and promote natural solutions to improve climate preparedness.
- D.** Ways to maintain, enhance, collaborate on, and promote environmental justice and environmental stewardship.

**For example, a key role of an Environmental Advisory Board would be to review and comment on evolving drafts of the comprehensive plan and climate change elements concerning the environment.** Reviewing and commenting on plans is one of the main roles of the FAB and the AAB and would thus also apply here.

The Commissioners do not need to adopt a comprehensive plan policy calling for an Environmental Advisory Board in advance of its establishment; however, such a policy should be included in the proposed comprehensive plan update.

**The advisory board would complement and not compete with any other governmental efforts to restore and manage the natural environment.**

### **Additional roles of the Environmental Conservation Advisory Board**

- Examine and advise on possible solutions and options for natural resource and environmental issues as they arise in Skagit County.
- Ensure that best available science is consistently available for consideration in local planning.
- Advise on updates and priorities in the County's Open Space Concept Plan to account for climate change.
- Advise on Integrated Plans as they develop; in particular, areas of fish and wildlife habitat and corridors.
- Make recommendations on measures that may be needed to protect the Skagit's unique natural ecosystems.
- Advise on ways to honor private property rights while supporting voluntary conservation and restoration.

### **Groups and Community Members that might be considered for appointment to the board include:**

- **Nonprofit and Public Conservation and Restoration organizations that focus on environmental sustainability in the Skagit Area** (Skagit Land Trust, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, Skagit River Systems Cooperative,

Skagit Watershed Council, Skagit Conservation District, The Nature Conservancy, etc.)

- **Organizations focused on education or research about the environment, including climate change** (Skagit Climate Science Consortium, North Cascades Institute, Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Skagit Audubon Society, Evergreen Islands, etc.)
- **Conservation-oriented businesses and nonprofits with demonstrated knowledge, interest and experience in one of the following areas:** natural sequestering of carbon; recycling; gleanings; native habitat restoration and/or engineering; surface water management; conservation biology; climate impacts on forests; aquatic or terrestrial ecology; hydrology etc.
- **Next generation groups with environmental programs** (Skagit Valley College, Triumph Teen Centre, Vamos Outdoors, Anacortes Green Club, etc.)
- **Community members and landowners at large from each district including young people** (under 23), those interested or with expertise in environmental issues, and members of an underserved community that may be disproportionately affected by climate change impacts.
- **This group would consult as needed with others including: tribal representatives; large ecosystem public land managers** (National Park Service, US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife, WA Department of Natural Resources, WA State Parks, etc.); **other entities** planning for natural lands and open space locally; **natural resources** boards etc.

**Submitted on July 11, 2024 on behalf of Skagit Land Trust  
Molly Doran, Executive Director**

Written comment submitted by Skagit Land Trust on July 12, 2024.

### **Climate Change**

**Form a task force to work with staff to write a Climate Action Framework for Skagit County. The more communities participate in planning and strategy, the more realistic and effective the plan.**

- **Compose a diverse task force with representatives from organizations and community members that reflect our “whole system”.** At the table should be those focused on health, transportation, housing, conservation, natural resources, business, tourism, social justice, etc.
- Aim to work across jurisdictions (towns, cities, county) and have common, integrated goals and programs.
- **Climate impacts fall hardest on those that did the least to cause them.** Actions must assist these people and **they must be at the table.**

**A Framework will not only help the County but also assist community-based organizations to help develop climate solutions.**

- **Make a base map of the areas most vulnerable** to climate change as part of the Comprehensive Plan Supplemental Map section. This should include sea level rise, river flooding, excessive fire danger, geologic hazard areas (landslides, alluvial fans,

erosion areas), areas with infrastructure hazards/potential failure that will be at increased risk with climate changes.

- **Speed up efforts to map the true 100-year flood plain.** Map how it will change over time.
- **Consult with the Skagit Climate Science Consortium. They** are local experts on climate change and have local data to inform this map.
  - Their maps use best available science and are free:  
[www.skagitclimatescience.org/flood-scenario-map/](http://www.skagitclimatescience.org/flood-scenario-map/)

## **Resiliency**

### **EDUCATION:**

- **Publish the map of potentially impacted areas that climate models show.** If people know they are vulnerable, they are more likely to move voluntarily or submit to voluntary buy outs or other options.
  - We also appreciate the County’s mapping exercise at Open Houses which incorporates local knowledge and should be used with above.
- **Explore how resiliency options could work and make the options public so that people are educated on concepts and how they work. Consider:**
  - Managed retreat.
  - A Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program or other incentives to encourage property owners to move or exchange development rights voluntarily.
  - Use of grant funds and mitigation programs for voluntary buy outs by government organizations and conservation organizations.
- **Make a county web page on Climate Change and Resiliency: facts, tactics, science, stories and guidance such as “Best ways to lower your carbon footprint”**

### **REGULATION:**

- **Pass Conservation Subdivision regulations.** This would allow professional conservation organizations or government entities to purchase part of a property from a voluntary landowner for strict conservation purposes without going through the current arduous and expensive subdivision process. A conservation easement would be placed on the land purchased to ensure it was not developed. This is a win-win for adapting to climate change and for landowners who often want to keep the productive parts of their land, or move their home to a resilient location, but do not want to manage sensitive or increasingly hazardous excess acreage.
- **Have a Goal to Stop Putting Development in Harm’s Way. Enact a mixture of voluntary incentives, education and regulations to:**
  - restrict further development in the 100-year flood plan.
  - restrict new development in natural hazard areas.
  - restrict new development in areas most vulnerable to sea level rise.
- **Enact code that allows more land to be “sponges” and pollution strainers.**
  - Allow for 100% recycling of household grey water in appropriate circumstances.

- Lessen impact of storm water system through controlled release and evaporation systems (natural greenspace protection, green roofs)
  - Allow for experimentation in new homes or neighborhoods i.e. circular sewer systems.
  - Add stricter code that protects aquifers, with special attention to sole source aquifers.
- **Skagit County should actively plan for sea level rise and climate change by updating the Shoreline Master Program in the next three years.**
    - Conduct a sea-level rise vulnerability assessment and make it public.
    - Add language that avoids construction in tidal and storm surge areas.
    - Select a base elevation for all structures, utilities, and septic systems that will withstand inundation or destabilization for at least 60 years based on best available science.
    - Ensure robust shoreline buffers on both marine and freshwater shorelines with strict limits for variances.
    - Require that development on feeder bluffs have setbacks that reflect the typical lifespan of a building (i.e. 55 -100 years).
    - Stress avoidance of new overwater structures. Any new overwater structures should minimize and mitigate impacts to eelgrass, kelp, and other critical environments.
    - Limit hard armoring of shorelines to situations where there is no other alternative to protect an existing structure.
    - Do not classify boulders as soft armoring.
    - Require that new development be situated to avoid needing shoreline stabilization.
  - **Develop systems to preserve our forests, wetlands, water and soils for natural carbon storage** as a way to reduce carbon emissions in the County.
    - Identify carbon sequestration as a compatible forestry practice for Open Space taxation.
    - Allow increased carbon storage (bio-char, etc.), including through mitigation programs, as compatible agricultural land uses for Open Space taxation.
    - Adopt strict critical area code for science-based buffer widths to protect and restore healthy freshwater and coastal wetlands in all land use areas. These store more carbon per acre than any habitat on earth. They also buffer communities from sea level rise, flooding, and fire.

## **PLANNING & STRATEGY**

- **In the comprehensive plan chapters on Land Use, Natural Resources, and Environment elevate natural resource conservation for all types of land.**

Prioritize conserving lands that mitigate climate change while helping provide clean water, unpolluted air, the ability for communities to adapt to changing conditions, and places for fish and wildlife to adapt.
- **Develop a transportation plan that incorporates sea level rise and natural hazard conditions into its planning.**
  - Identify roads at risk of erosion, natural hazards, or inundation due to climate change.



- Have a plan that accepts that not all lands currently behind dikes or levees will remain viable for development or agriculture.
- Develop ways for towns and neighborhoods with access roads at risk to help pay for dike and drainage infrastructure protecting those roads.
- **Update the [Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Concept Plan](#) with climate change and green connectors in mind. Reduction of Greenhouse Gases (GHGs)**
- **Focus on the causes of GHG emissions.** Every solution should be linked to the causes.
- **Create incentives to build electric vehicle charging infrastructure in rural areas**, including eastern Skagit County. Currently there are no public charging stations upriver, which greatly reduces incentives to move to electric transportation.
- **Prioritize the development of interconnected trails systems between towns and cities to decrease the use of motorized vehicles.**
  - Increase ways for communities to use non-carbon transportation- trails, bike paths, electric charging stations.
  - Allow public access trails on dikes. Develop incentives and protections for dike districts and adjacent landowners.
  - Develop additional trails to attract recreationists and eco-tourists (such as birders) increasing the county's tourist economy without increasing the carbon footprint. Eco-tourism contributes over \$20 billion to Washington's GDP and growing. Skagit County is uniquely positioned to capitalize on this trend with more tourist infrastructure such as trails and wildlife viewing sites.
  - Make completing the Centennial Trail from Snohomish County to Whatcom County a priority.
  - Develop a bike path from Edison to Burlington. The Samish Flats are a tourism site needing safer passage for bikers and walkers.
- **Work with cities and towns to help them plan for and absorb more people, homes, and businesses.** Modify the population distribution goal so that 90% of new population growth is in urban areas (rather than the current 80% goal).
- **Encourage 20-minute neighborhoods.** 20-minute neighborhoods are places where residents have easy, convenient access to many of the places and services they use daily including grocery stores, restaurants, schools, and parks, without relying heavily on cars. Increasing the walkability of neighborhoods will reduce the county's carbon output. **Encourage smaller "truck" farms on the edges of cities and towns through zoning incentives.**
- **Focus strongly on keeping growth in urban areas and making those urban areas livable.**
  - Establish high thresholds for when cities and towns are allowed to expand their Urban Growth Areas (UGAs).
  - Do not allow UGAs to expand into floodplain or critical areas.
  - Have programs that purchase development rights around UGAs to contain development and provide green spaces, parks, and trails. Green spaces will also help absorb storm waters and keep urban areas cooler.

Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.

- Stop sprawl by outlawing Fully Contained Communities (FCC) in rural areas. FCCs increase GHG emissions as they contribute to increased vehicle use.
- **Develop Plans to Reduce harm including erosion, floods, and sea level rise by planning for green systems that allow natural processes to operate.**
- **Focus on connecting green spaces and wildlife corridors so wildlife can move freely as their habitat changes or is lost.**

## Preliminary Draft Policy Public Comment Periods

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Between July and October 2024, Skagit County presented preliminary draft policy changes to the Planning Commission as part of an ongoing effort to engage the community and gather input on potential updates. The draft policies were introduced to the Planning Commission according to a specific schedule, outlined below, ensuring a structured and transparent review process.

Following each Planning Commission meeting where draft policies were presented, the County provided a 30-day public comment period. During this time, residents and stakeholders were encouraged to share their feedback via the Skagit County website. This process aimed to foster community participation and ensure diverse perspectives were considered in shaping the proposed policies.

The results and summaries of the feedback gathered during these public comment periods are presented in the sections that follow, offering an overview of the input received and its potential impact on the proposed policy changes.

Comprehensive Plan Element	Planning Commission Date	Public Comment Period Deadline	Public Comments Collected
Rural	July 23, 2024	8/22/2024	13
Natural Resource Lands	July 23, 2024	8/22/2024	13
Land Use	August 20, 2024	9/19/2024	5
Housing	August 20, 2024	9/19/2024	12
Economic Development	August 20, 2024	9/19/2024	6
Transportation	September 24, 2024	10/24/2024	7
Capital Facilities	September 24, 2024	10/24/2024	3
Environment	October 22, 2024	11/22/2024	12
Climate and Resiliency (New Element)	October 22, 2024	11/22/2024	90

# Climate Engagement Summary

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Skagit County is adding a Climate Element into its Comprehensive Plan in response to [Washington State House Bill \(HB\) 1181](#), passed in 2023. The Climate Element will include goals and policies to reduce emissions and prepare for climate-intensified natural hazards.

Public input and feedback are critical to Climate Element development and to ensuring the plan and policies reflect the Skagit community. The project team developed and implemented an engagement strategy to reach Skagit County’s community members to meaningfully hear feedback and integrate community input. Findings from this process informed the development of actionable policies.

Climate Element-specific engagement took place in October 2024 and built on a phase of engagement about the Comprehensive Plan more broadly, which took place in June 2024. Cascadia Consulting Group led Climate Element Engagement alongside County staff, in partnership with Kimley Horn and Facet.

This document describes the engagement strategies used to collect input about the Climate Element and a summary of key findings across engagement touchpoints. Please see individual engagement summaries for full details about the questions asked and the comments received.

## Engagement Strategies

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Engagement for the Climate Element included three main strategies: an in-person open house, a community-wide online survey, and stakeholder group interviews. After each engagement strategy, the project team summarized findings in an engagement summary.

Engagement strategies at a glance:

Engagement strategy	Date(s)	Summary	Number of participants
Open house	Oct. 1, 2024	An in-person drop-in event where community members read and engaged with posters about the Climate Element and Critical Areas Element, shared their feedback, and asked questions.	35
Community survey	Oct. 11-31, 2024	An online survey hosted on SurveyMonkey with questions about how Skagit residents understand and are impacted by climate change, and about potential Climate Element policy areas.	652
Stakeholder interviews	Oct. 3-14, 2024	A set of five virtual interviews with Skagit County community groups.	7

### Open House

Skagit County and the consulting team hosted a public open house to inform the community about the Climate Element, understand how residents are impacted by climate change, and gather feedback on key policy areas. The event took place on Tuesday, October 1, 2024, from 5:30-7 PM at Jefferson Elementary School in Mount Vernon, with 35 participants attending.

The open house was a drop-in event featuring nine posters organized into four stations: Comprehensive Plan and Climate Element Overview, GHG Emissions Reduction, Climate Resilience, and Critical Areas and the Environment. Posters included informational content and interactive activities, allowing participants to share their experiences with climate impacts, identify policy priorities, and offer suggestions for the Climate Element. Feedback collected from the event helped to inform policy development.

## Community-wide Survey

Skagit County and the consulting team developed and hosted a survey to inform the community about the Climate Element, learn more about how Skagit residents understand and are impacted by climate change, and gather input on key policy areas. The survey included six sections: Climate Awareness, Climate Concerns, Policies and Actions, Challenges and Opportunities, Your Connection to Skagit County, and Demographics.

The survey was hosted via SurveyMonkey and linked on the County's webpage for the planning effort. It was promoted at the Climate Open House on October 1, 2024 and online; participants in stakeholder interviews were also invited to share the survey with their networks. The survey was open from October 11, 2024 through October 31, 2024 and was available in English and Spanish. It received 652 total responses.

## Stakeholder Interviews

Skagit County and Cascadia Consulting Group conducted interviews with key community organizations and stakeholders to inform Climate Element policy development.

The interviews aimed to: 1) include groups typically excluded from planning processes or significantly impacted by policy implementation, and 2) build trust by drawing on community expertise and addressing equity concerns.

Five virtual interviews were held with seven interviewees between October 3 and October 14, 2024. Cascadia led the interviews, with Skagit County staff attending all sessions and Kimley-Horn staff attending two. Interviewees included:

- Skagit Land Trust
- Evergreen Islands
- Mark Lundsén
- Skagit Watershed Council
- Familias Unidas por la Justicia / Community 2 Community

Interview questions focused on actions Skagit County should prioritize to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen resilience to climate-intensified natural hazards. Feedback from these interviews complemented other engagement efforts and guided the development of policies.

## Key Findings

### Overall Support for Climate Policies

**Across all three engagement strategies, participants expressed strong overall support for the Climate Element** and its goals to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and strengthen climate resilience.

Over 70% of survey respondents strongly or somewhat favored the resilience policy areas presented, while a majority (50% or more) supported all of the GHG emissions reduction policy areas.

### Climate Concerns

**Sea level rise, flooding, wildfire and smoke, and heat-related impacts** are the climate impacts that participants most raised concerns about.

- **Flooding:** Flooding ranked among the top three climate concerns for survey respondents (89% of respondents were concerned). In open-ended responses, many respondents highlighted risks to homes and property in the floodplain, including difficulties obtaining insurance, and limited resources for protecting or maintaining homes against extreme weather. At the open house and in interviews, participants recommended limiting development in floodplains and improving education on risks to lives and properties from flooding.
- **Wildfire and Smoke:** Wildfire (91% of respondents were concerned) and wildfire smoke (90% were concerned) ranked among the top concerns for survey respondents. Across engagement strategies, participants mentioned that wildfire and wildfire smoke pose a threat to both personal safety and community assets,

particularly agricultural lands, homes, and infrastructure. Farmworkers face unsafe working conditions due to smoke and extreme heat. Ecosystems are also likely to be damaged by fires and smoke.

- **Heat-related Impacts:** Participants in all engagement strategies raised concerns about higher summer temperatures and more frequent heat waves, including impacts to farmworkers and other outdoor workers, elderly people, and other vulnerable communities. Farmworkers are highly impacted by extreme heat; as is the agricultural industry more broadly.
- **Sea Level Rise:** Participants, particularly at the open house, expressed that addressing sea level rise is a high priority and called for explicit mention of it in resilience policies.

## Top Policy Areas

**Expanding renewable energy, improving transit and multimodal access, and conserving ecosystems** were the policy areas with the most support across engagement strategies.

- **Renewable Energy:** Renewable energy was the most supported GHG reduction policy area at the open house and was supported by a majority of interviewees and survey respondents. Interviewees suggested that the County map possible areas for battery energy storage systems, solar, and wind, rather than waiting for developers to submit proposals. 73 written survey responses mentioned renewable energy suggestions, including supporting solar, wind, and other renewable energy projects, as well as updating waste infrastructure to support emission reductions.
- **Transportation and Public Transit:** Support for improved public transit, cycling, and pedestrian infrastructure appeared consistently across engagement strategies. Among interviewees, transitioning buses to electric and improving transit frequency were key recommendations. Within the survey, 140 out of 378 open-ended responses about specific Climate Element policy suggestions mentioned transportation solutions. These included expanding public transit, improving bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and providing electric vehicle (EV) incentives to reduce emissions from transportation.
- **Ecosystem Conservation:** Protecting and restoring natural ecosystems emerged as a top priority across engagement strategies. At the open house, ecosystem protection was the most supported resilience policy area. Interviewees emphasized protection of shorelines, floodplains, wetlands, and forests as a resilience strategy. Survey respondents similarly supported protecting urban trees, open space, and forest lands.

Participants voiced particular support for policies to prevent development in forests and hazard-prone areas; encourage dense, mixed-use development in urban areas to minimize sprawl; and build resilience to drought and flooding across agricultural lands.

## Concerns and Barriers

**Participants raised concerns about the costs of climate policies and emphasized the importance of equity and inclusion.**

- **Concern about costs:** Cost-related challenges, including retrofitting homes or transitioning to electric vehicles (EVs), were consistently raised. In open-ended survey responses, many mentioned that costs, such as expensive retrofits or high utility bills, limit their ability to adapt their homes or properties to climate risks. Some respondents voiced caution, seeking assurances that climate policies would not harm local jobs or economic stability, especially for agriculture and small businesses.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Ensuring diverse and underrepresented groups have a voice was a recurring theme, though perspectives varied. Interviewee and survey respondents noted the need to address the unique challenges faced by rural areas and frontline communities, including farmworkers and Tribes.

Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.

- **Community collaboration:** Many participants expressed an interest in continuing to be engaged in climate planning and projects. Open house and interview participants proposed creating an Environmental Advisory Committee and recommended supporting farmworkers with an ongoing seat at the table to make climate-related decisions. Many open-ended survey respondents suggested greater collaboration with residents or organizations and enhancing public education efforts.

### **Demographics**

The survey asked each respondent their age, gender, and race/ethnicity. Over half of respondents indicated that they are at least 55 years old and over 90% of participants who chose an option other than “I prefer not to say” indicated that they are White or Caucasian, suggesting significant underrepresentation of younger and more diverse populations.

# Climate Open House

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## Open House Overview

<b>Date &amp; Time</b>	Tuesday October 1, 2024 5:30-7PM
<b>Location</b>	Jefferson Elementary School 1801 E Blackburn Rd, Mount Vernon, WA 98274
<b># of Participants</b>	35
<b>County and Consulting Attendees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Skagit County<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Robby Eckroth</li><li>○ Tara Satushek</li><li>○ Betsy Stevenson</li><li>○ Andy Wargo</li><li>○ Caitie Sheban</li></ul></li><li>• Cascadia Consulting<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Maddie Seibert</li><li>○ Sarah Farbstein</li></ul></li><li>• Kimley Horn<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Erin O’Kelley</li><li>○ Heidi Rous</li><li>○ Joel Farias</li></ul></li><li>• Facet<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Dan Nickel</li></ul></li></ul>

## Open House Posters

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- Poster 1: Comprehensive Plan Overview
- Poster 2: Climate Element Overview
- Poster 3: What Causes Climate Change?
- Poster 4: Prioritizing GHG Emission Reduction Policies\*
- Poster 5: How Will Climate Change Impact Skagit County?
- Poster 6: How are you affected?\*
- Poster 7: Where do you see climate impacts?\*
- Poster 8: Prioritizing Climate Resilience Policies\*

\*See Appendix A for images of the open house poster activities and the written responses.

## Key Takeaways

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- Most attendees who attended the open house were supportive of the Climate Element. Many individuals who attended the open house are actively involved with environmental and conservation groups in Skagit County.
- Several attendees voiced concerns about using credible and consistent science to the project team.
- Many attendees were concerned about the impacts of sea level rise and were worried it would not be adequately addressed in the Climate Element.
- Of the six shared GHG emissions reduction policy categories, renewable energy sources received the most support and electric vehicles received the least.



- Of the eight shared climate resilience policy categories, natural ecosystem protection and restoration received the most support and building weatherization received the least.
- There were a few policy ideas that were common among attendees suggestions:
  - Supporting agricultural practices that reduce GHG emissions and sequester carbon
  - Increasing bike and pedestrian infrastructure
  - Creating a Climate or Environmental Advisory Committee
  - Reducing lawns and planting native flora and trees
  - Supporting farm worker working in extreme heat and poor air quality.
  - Ensuring sea-level rise is adequately addressed in resilience policies.

## Climate Change Impacts in Skagit County

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Participants were asked, “How have climate impacts, such as warmer temperatures, flooding, wildfires, or smoky days, personally affected you or your household? How have they affected others in your community?”. Below are the common themes from responses.

### **Air Quality and Smoke:**

- Wildfire smoke prevents outdoor activities, triggers asthma, and forces windows to remain closed. Poor air quality means fewer days spent outside.
- Smoke from wildfires affects entire communities, including children and those with respiratory issues. Farmworkers face unsafe working conditions due to smoke and extreme heat.

### **Flooding and Sea Level Rise:**

- Development continues around shorelines and floodplains despite rising sea levels, putting homes at risk. Flooding and epic weather events are now regular, affecting homes in flood-prone areas.
- Coastal communities are already experiencing flooding and sewage treatment issues due to sea level rise. Infrastructure is not prepared for the increasing frequency of storms and extreme river events, and dikes need repair.

### **Extreme Heat and Temperature Variations:**

- Warmer days affect garden growth and cause erosion. Extreme heat makes outdoor activities, such as walking, difficult due to lack of tree cover. Heatwaves limit day-to-day activities for households with vulnerable members (e.g., elderly, asthma sufferers).
- As temperatures rise, more people (especially the elderly and underprivileged) are experiencing heat-related deaths. Schoolchildren and farmworkers are also affected, with concerns about safety in extreme heat.

### **Environmental Degradation and Loss of Biodiversity:**

- There is frustration over pavement sprawl and biologically empty lawns replacing diverse, natural landscapes. Concerns about the regression of recycling efforts are also growing.
- The loss of wildlife and plant diversity is seen as reducing the overall quality of life. Climate anxiety is rising as people feel their communities are not prepared for these changes.

### **Public Transportation and Infrastructure:**

- Households want to use public transportation more, but the lack of bus routes, frequency, and bike paths make this difficult, especially outside major cities.
- Communities are grappling with outdated infrastructure that is not prepared for climate impacts like higher tides and more frequent storms. There's also a lack of updated mapping and data to guide responsible development.

## Policy Areas Feedback

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## GHG Emissions Reduction

Participants were asked to place a star by the GHG emissions reduction policies they support and would like to see prioritized. Of the 6 GHG emissions reduction policy categories, renewable energy sources received the most votes with 12, followed by alternative transportation options (11), energy efficient buildings (10), land conservation & sprawl reduction (10), waste reduction (7), and electric vehicles with the fewest votes at 6.

Participants were also asked to share what else the County should consider, beyond the listed policy categories. The following are the policy recommendations shared:

Sector	Recommendation	Instances
Agriculture & Food Systems	Incentivize farmers to use practices that reduce GHG emissions and sequester carbon, such as reducing tillage and increasing organic matter	3
Buildings & Energy	Create incentives for community solar on commercial buildings and parking lots.	1
Buildings & Energy	Develop a map of where it would be possible to site commercial scale solar, wind, and battery storage facilities.	2
Buildings & Energy	Encourage the reduction of energy use through educational campaigns	2
Ecosystems	Sequester carbon through marshland restoration.	1
Ecosystems	Sequester carbon by protecting and restoring forests.	1
Ecosystems	Evaluate and conserve areas that contribute to “blue carbon”	1
Transportation	Increase bike and pedestrian infrastructure to reduce vehicle miles traveled. Add ‘green connectors’ in cities to support travel by walking, biking, and other forms of active transportation.	4
Transportation	Increase EV charging stations, especially east of I-5.	1
Transportation	Convert all buses to electric and increase bus services.	2
Transportation	Install EV charging infrastructure for public transportation and private vehicles in all developed areas of Skagit County.	1
Transportation	Develop a program to incentivize alternative modes of transportation by offering rebates on e-bike.	1
Waste Management	Sequester carbon through the production of biochar	1
Waste Management	Support recycling of waste materials, particularly glass.	1
Waste Management	Develop community food waste reduction plans and compost facilities	1
Waste Management	Develop incentives for businesses and residents to pay for food/yard waste pick up.	1
Zoning & Development	Reduce sprawl and encourage growth in cities. Increase urban density.	1
Zoning & Development	Require EV charging stations in new apartment buildings.	1

## Climate Resilience

Participants were asked to place a star by the climate resilience policies they support and would like to see prioritized. Of the 8 climate resilience policy categories, natural ecosystem protection

and restoration received the most votes with 17, followed by community education and outreach (11), infrastructure resilience (10), water protection and conservation (10), environmental justice and social equity (8), agriculture and food systems (8), community preparedness and response (7), and building weatherization with the fewest votes at 6.

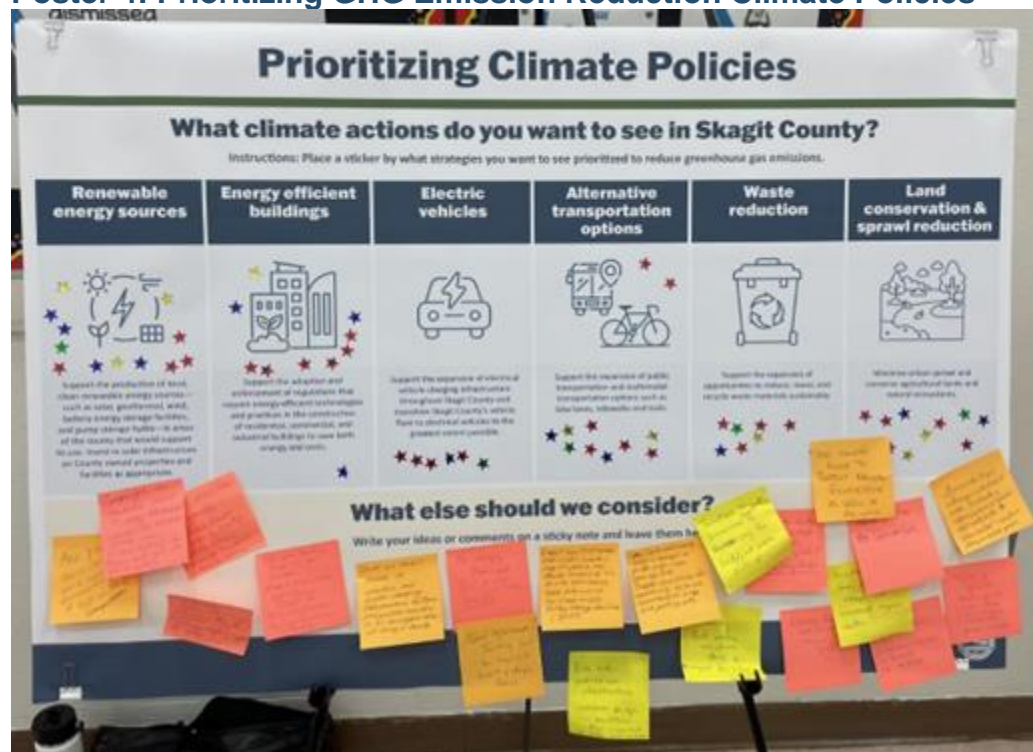
Participants were also asked to share what else the County should consider, beyond the listed policy categories. The following are the policy recommendations shared:

Sector	Recommendation	Instances
General	Create a Climate or Environmental Advisory Committee	3
Agriculture & Food Systems	Support the agricultural industry to decrease water use, fertilizers that pollute, green gas emissions, and crops that need enormous resource support.	1
Agriculture & Food Systems	Support regional farms providing community food system resilience	1
Buildings & Energy	Plan for moving critical energy facilities out of the floodplain (e.g. electric substations) and do not permit any more (e.g. battery storage) in the floodplain.	1
Ecosystems	Protect salmon habitat, natural ecosystems, and agricultural land.	2
Ecosystems	Create incentives for planting trees, such as providing free trees.	3
Ecosystems	Transform parking lots into natural spaces and parks.	1
Ecosystems	Widen sidewalk strips and bury powerlines in residential neighborhoods to plant big conifers to mitigate heat, store carbon, and restore native landscape.	1
Ecosystems	Protect salt marshes to mitigate sea level rise and protect wildlife habitat.	1
Emergency Management	Conduct citizen training by emergency management services for emergency hazard response.	1
Emergency Management	Move dikes back to mitigate sea level rise.	2
Emergency Management	Ensure sea-level rise is adequately addressed in resilience policies.	3
Emergency Management	Create a TDR program to incentivize shoreline, riparian, and floodplain homeowners to move out of harms way	1
Emergency Management	Update geohazard mapping with a multi-decade horizon considering sea level rise, heavier rain episodes, and bigger floods.	1
Emergency Management	Plan for 80-100 years of infrastructure and setbacks to absorb climate impacts such as sea level rise.	1
Health & Well-being	Create a campaign to reduce poisons and chemicals under the kitchen sink in flood zones.	1

Health & Well-being	Increase tree canopy on playgrounds and at schools for heat control.	2
Health & Well-being	Support farm worker with protections against working in extreme heat and poor air quality.	3
Water Resources	Encourage homeowners to reduce lawns and plant native flora and trees in yards to conserve water resources and increase tree canopy.	6
Water Resources	Develop an integrated plan for all watersheds in the region.	1
Zoning & Development	Strictly enforce regulations against building in geohazard zones.	1

## Appendix A: Climate Element Open House Poster Activities

### Poster 4: Prioritizing GHG Emission Reduction Climate Policies

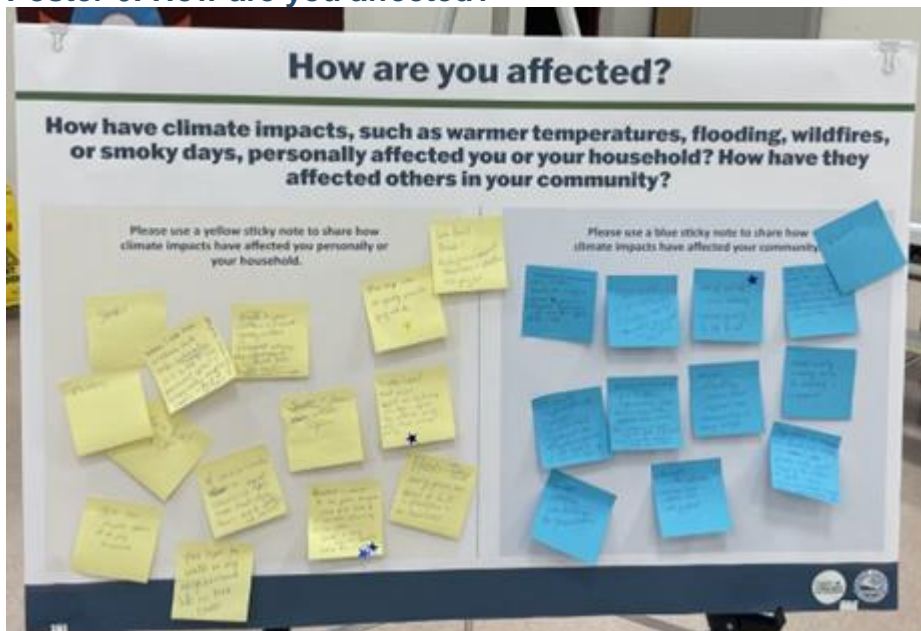


Renewable energy sources – 12 votes  
 Energy efficient buildings – 10 votes  
 Electric vehicles – 6 votes  
 Alternative transportation options – 11 votes  
 Waste reduction – 7 votes  
 Land conservation & sprawl reduction – 10 votes  
 What else should we consider?

- 90% of growth should go in cities. Make cities dense and livable with green connectors.
- Carbon sequestration by 1) marshland restoration 2) biochar 3) forests
- Crazy that we can't recycle glass!
- Incentives to farms for reduced tillage and increased organic matter

- What are the industry related actions that the County can action or regulate?
- Community food waste reduction plans and compost facilities
- Bike and pedestrian infrastructure – pedestrian bridge in downtown Mount Vernon connected to bike paths and lanes.
- Facilitate community solar – arrays on public buildings and over parking lots. Create incentives for community solar on commercial buildings and parking lots.
- Least conflict solar and wind: create a map of where in County it would be okay to site commercial scale solar and wind facilities – also battery storage facilities (BESS)
- New apartment buildings should be required to have EV charging stations
- No charging stations past I-5 to east currently, easy fix
- Convert all buses to electric and install charging infrastructure for them and private vehicles in all developed areas of Skagit County.
- We are treating these 1:1 and reactive. Make map where green energy should go BESS, wind, solar, etc. Go out 50-100 year in thinking
- Incentives to businesses/ residents to pay for food/yard waste pick up
- Habitat protection for salmon – resilience policy
- Given the large estuary and intertidal area, evaluate and then conserve areas that contribute to “blue carbon”
- Use county funds to protect natural ecosystems as well as ag land - resilience policy
- Plant more trees in yards, reduce lawns by planting native flora, encourage meadows instead of lawns - resilience
- Reduce use of electricity power/or other, turn off lights at night for instance
- Campaign to reduce poisons and icky chemicals under the kitchen sink in flood zones so these don’t get into flood waters – resilience
- Are you cross checking your carbon numbers emissions data with Port of Skagit?

### Poster 6: How are you affected?



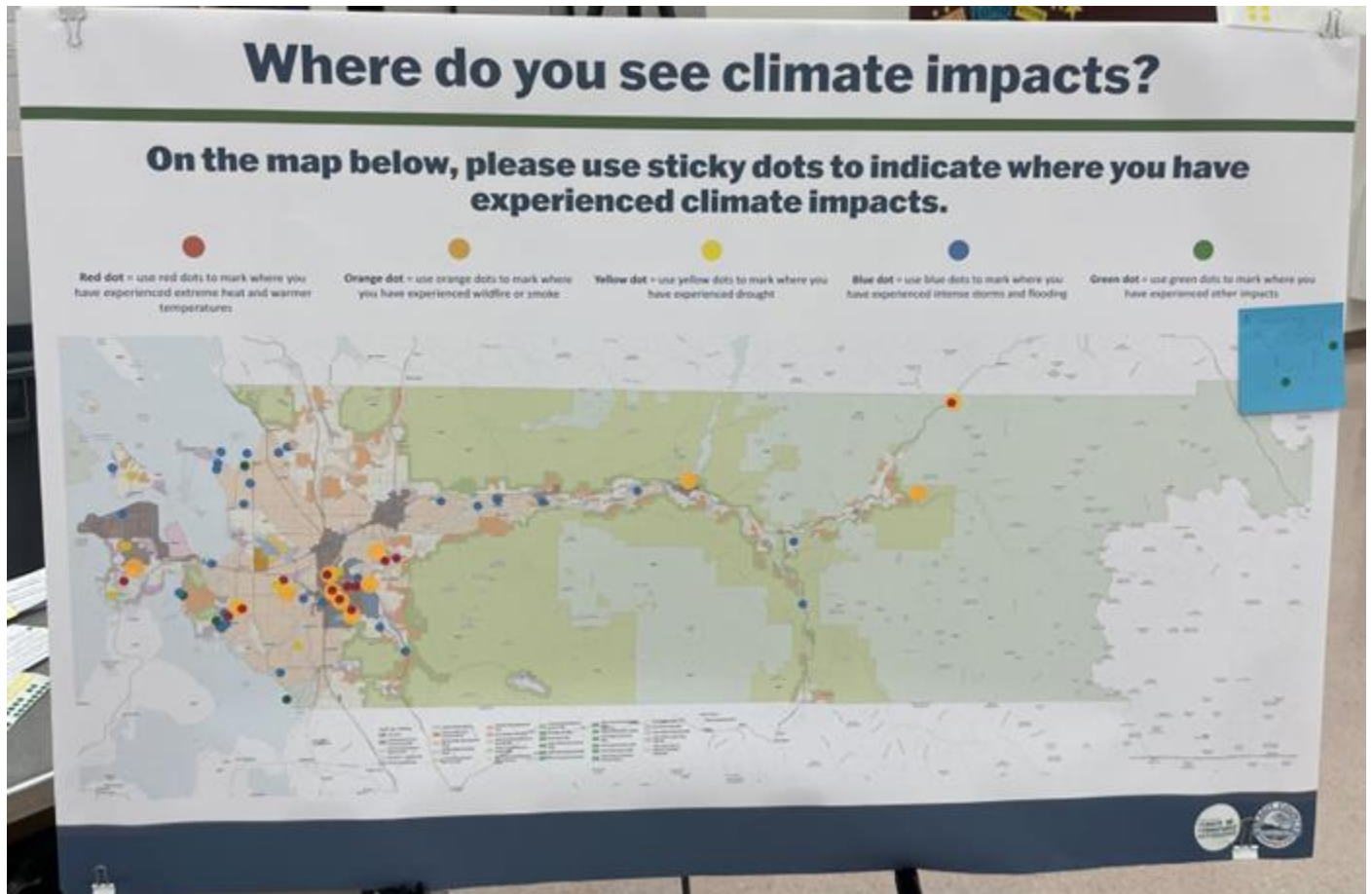
How climate impacts have affected you personally or your household

How climate impacts have affected your community

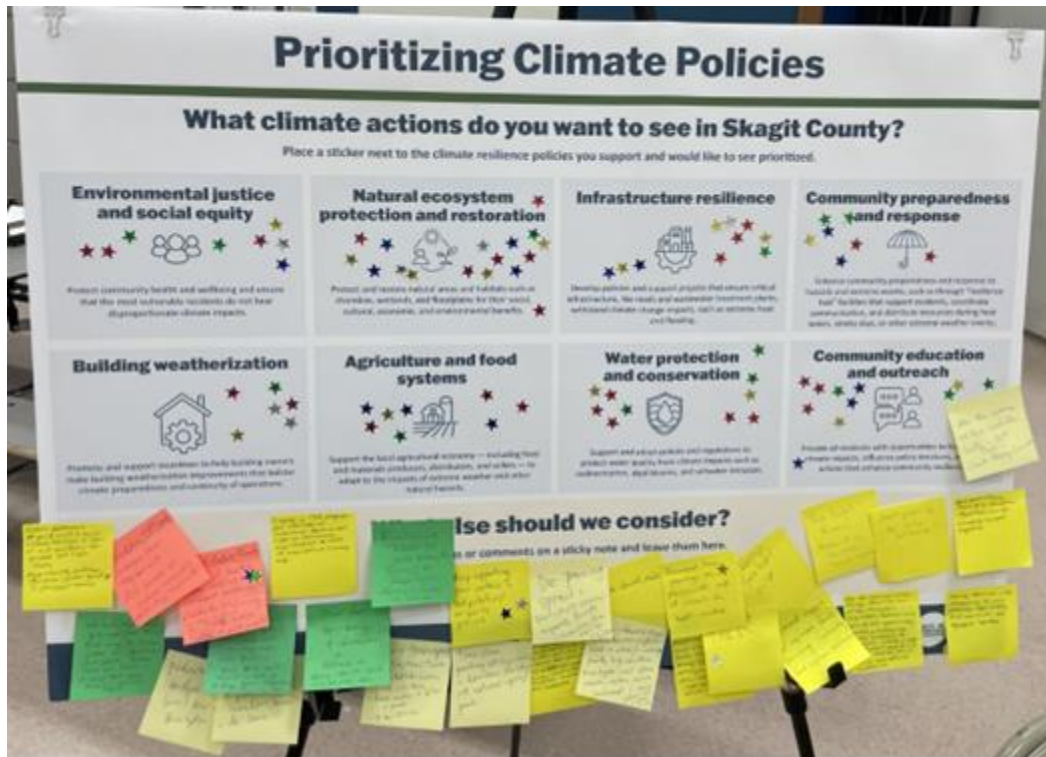
Sea level rise – development around shorelines and floodplains still going on!	Flooding
More days when air quality prevents going outside. +1	As an ICU nurse, I've cared for multiple underprivileged and elderly folks who have died of hyperthermia due to hotter summer weather in our area.
Flooding	Climate anxiety increasing. Feeling the community is unprepared.
When I see how Western WA looks <u>naturally</u> , it is so sad to see pavement sprawl and biologically empty lawns instead of tall trees and diverse nature landscape	My town is considering sea level rise mitigation (La Conner), farmers talk about keeping the dikes in good repair. Uncertainty of actual changes keep people unable to make definitive decisions.
Smoke	Loss of wildlife and plant diversity = lowered quality of life for all +1
Wildfire smoke triggers asthma and prevents opening windows	Sea level rise already flooding coastal communities and sewage treatment facilities
Unexpected warmer days affect growth in vegetable garden. Rainfall increases erosion in yard.	Flooding in communities along Salish Sea. Smoke from wildfires. Warmer and unexpected temperatures affect garden crop.
Sea level rise	Water, flooding issues that impact community in many ways
Hate that recycling appears to be going backwards	Drought, weather extreme, smoky days, extreme heat, risk of flood
Too hot to walk in neighborhood because no tree cover	We are already seeing impact of older infrastructure, more storms and higher tides, extreme river events. Our mapping is not up to date. Infrastructure and building still happening without good data.
Of course smoke and concern of forest fires from dead and dying trees due to years of drought	Climate impacts on school children with respect to temperature (too hot) and anxiety
Smoke – less time outside so far	Unsafe working conditions for farmworkers
Smoky days/heat waves affect our day to day activities – spouse has asthma, young children in house, elderly family. +1	
Household want to use public transport more but lack of 1)bus routes/frequency 2)bike paths - makes it very difficult especially outside main cities +2	
Floods – epic weather events every year now homes at risk in floodplain and on shorelines	

## Poster 7: Where do you see climate impacts?

Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.



**Poster 8: Prioritizing Climate Resilience Policies**



Environmental justice and social equity – 8 votes  
 Natural ecosystem protection and restoration – 17 votes  
 Infrastructure resilience – 10 votes  
 Community preparedness and response – 7 votes  
 Building weatherization – 6 votes  
 Agriculture and food systems – 8 votes  
 Water protection and conservation – 10 votes  
 Community education and outreach – 11 votes  
 What else should we consider?

- Use the science we have available locally – Skagit Climate Science Consortium. Create a Climate Advisory Committee
- Have more citizen training by emergency management services for emergency hazard response
- Start planning for dike setbacks!
- Provide farmers with incentives to use practices that reduce GHG emissions and sequester carbon – GHG policy
- Sea level rise!! Name it as an issue! Look at impacts
- Plan for moving critical energy facilities out of the floodplain (e.g. electric substations) and do not permit any more (e.g. battery storage) in the floodplain. Create a map of where it would be okay to site such facilities as well as solar and wind installations.
- Increased tree planting on playgrounds and at schools for heat control +1
- De-paving sprawl in Burlington/Mt. Vernon – Miyawaki forests, incentives/free trees for big 3 conifers
- Environment needs its own advisory board (Council) at Skagit County, farming and forestry have one
- Create a TDR program and other ways to incentivize shoreline and riparian homeowners, also floodplain residents to move out of harms way



- Update geohazard mapping with a multi-decade horizon in light of sea level rise and heavy rain episodes and bigger floods. More strictly enforce regulations against building in geohazard zones.
- Building weatherization – reduce power requirements, ask people to reduce amount of power they use/waste - GHG policy
- We love agriculture but we need to find ways to lower water use, fertilizers that pollute, green gas emissions, and crops that need enormous resource support
- Plant native plants; get rid of lawns (stop mowing and increase carbon sequestration); holds the land securely in case of flood; plant more trees on private property +2
- Get all the players together who work with conservation, rivers, dikes, farmland and the government entities and do a full scale / all watershed integrated plan
- Plan for 80-100 year of infrastructure and setbacks to absorb climate impacts and sea level rise
- Incentivize / support residents to plan wildflower meadows/trees and de-lawn
- Pedestrian bike bridge to West Mount Vernon and Burlington
- Green transportation infrastructure – protected bike lanes, e-bike subsidies, train routes to Bellingham and Seattle, increase bus service – GHG policy
- Keep supporting farm workers in heat protection/air quality policies +2
- Transform parking lot by river in downtown Mt. Vernon into natural space/ park!
- Widen sidewalk strips in residential neighborhood to allow/incentivize planting big conifers to mitigate heat, store carbon, restore native landscape, and bury powerlines so trees can grow
- Sea level rise
- To make well informed decisions, the Planning Commission and the BOCC need ready access to advice from something like environmental advisory board with scientists, resource management, and stakeholders
- More trees +1
- Address sea level rise
- Use salt marsh to help absorb wave energy, move dikes back to allow saltwater marsh to develop or continue to exist as sea level rises, this will also protect important wildlife habitat
- Increased support for regional farms providing community food system resilience

# Climate Interviews

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To inform Climate Element policy development, Skagit County and Cascadia Consulting Group (Cascadia) hosted interviews with key community organizations in Skagit County. Interviews with key stakeholders aimed to:

- **Address gaps in representation** in the overall Climate Element community engagement process, particularly for groups typically excluded from planning processes or those significantly impacted by plan implementation.
- **Build community trust** by drawing from community lived experience and expertise, and by incorporating feedback from those likely to be impacted by policy changes.

Five virtual interviews with a total of seven interviewees took place from October 3 through October 14, 2024. Cascadia led the interviews and Skagit County staff attended. Kimley-Horn staff attended two of the interviews.

Interviewee Organization	Interview Date
Skagit Land Trust	October 3, 11:00am-12:00pm
Community 2 Community	October 3, 2:00-3:00pm
Mark Lundsén	October 10, 2:00-3:00pm
Evergreen Islands	October 10, 1:00-2:00pm
Skagit Watershed Council	October 14, 11:00am-12:00pm

## Interview Results

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Interviews discussed greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction policy areas, resilience policy areas, high-priority climate impacts and groups to focus on in policy development, and additional considerations for the County. Key takeaways and findings by topic are presented below.

### Key Takeaways

- Attendees were overall strongly supportive of the County creating GHG emissions reduction and resilience policies through the Climate Element.
- The most supported GHG emissions reduction policy topics among interviewees included:
  - Evaluate frequency and timing of Skagit County buses to expand bus access.
  - Transition Skagit County buses to electric vehicles.
  - Map possible areas for battery energy storage systems, solar, and wind, rather than waiting for developers to submit proposals.
- The most supported resilience policy topics included:
  - Protect shorelines, wetlands, and floodplains
  - Provide education about risks of owning property in floodplains. Offer assistance for people to make plans to mitigate hazards.
  - Do not encourage building in rural areas; maintain farmland, forest land, and conservation as main uses in rural areas.

- Community 2 Community’s perspective filled a gap in farmworker representation for this Climate Element engagement process. Key takeaways from this conversation are:
  - Ensuring that the local agricultural economy is resilient means making sure that farmworkers survive and live well – including being protected in case of climate disruptions.
  - Farmworkers are underrepresented in engagement and decision-making and are marginalized in many ways.
  - Disruptions for farmworkers related to climate are many and varied. They include shifting agricultural seasons, which disrupts yearly work schedules; migrating workers from warmer places into Skagit County; dangerous work conditions, and missed work days.
  - Farmworkers would like a seat at tables regarding climate change and agriculture in Skagit County and will need support and flexibility to participate in co-governance with the County.

### Policy Areas Feedback

#### GHG Emissions Reduction

Participants were first shown a set of possible policy areas for the Climate Element, including:

- Support the production of local, clean renewable energy sources such as solar, geothermal, wind, battery energy storage facilities, and pump storage hydro, in areas of the county that would support this use.
- Invest in solar infrastructure on County owned properties and facilities as appropriate.
- Support the adoption and enforcement of regulations that ensure the construction of residential, commercial and industrial buildings use energy-efficient technologies and practices that save energy and costs.
- Support the expansion of electrical vehicle charging infrastructure throughout Skagit county.
- Transition Skagit County’s motor pool fleet to electrical vehicles to the greatest extent possible.
- Support the expansion of public transportation and multimodal transportation options such as bike lanes, sidewalks and trails.
- Support the expansion of opportunities to reduce, reuse, and recycle waste materials sustainably.

Then, they answered:

- What specific actions should Skagit County prioritize to **reduce its impact on climate change** (e.g., reduce emissions)?
- What else **should the County keep in mind** as we draft and implement emissions reduction policies for the Climate Element?

Their responses are paraphrased and grouped into the Climate Element’s policy sectors below:

Sector	Recommendation	Organization
Overarching	Prioritize community education and incentives over mandates	Mark Lundsden
Agriculture & Food Systems	Protect food-producing land from development; minimize sprawl.	Community 2 Community
Buildings & Energy	Map possible areas for battery energy storage systems, solar, and wind, rather than waiting for developers to submit proposals.	Skagit Land Trust, Evergreen Islands
Buildings & Energy	Consider subsidies for small businesses to use energy-efficient technologies.	Community 2 Community

Buildings & Energy	Provide financial assistance for low-income residents to address natural gas leakage in their homes.	Community 2 Community
Ecosystems	Explore blue carbon sequestration	Evergreen Islands
Transportation	Expand electric vehicle charging, especially east of I-5. Include e-bikes.	Skagit Land Trust
Transportation	Transition Skagit County buses to electric vehicles.	Skagit Land Trust, Mark Lundsén
Transportation	Support electric vehicle expansion through education and demonstration vehicles.	Skagit Land Trust
Transportation	Establish and promote subsidies for low-income communities to buy electric vehicles and to maintain efficiency of ICE and EV vehicles they already own.	Community 2 Community
Transportation	Evaluate frequency and timing of Skagit County buses. Increase frequency between Skagit County and Bellingham and offer more buses in early mornings.	Skagit Land Trust, Community 2 Community, Mark Lundsén
Transportation	Update the County Open Space Plan and plan for more trails and trail connections.	Skagit Land Trust
Transportation	Expand bike lanes, particularly over bridges.	Skagit Land Trust
Waste Management	Establish waste management-related goals.	Community 2 Community
Zoning & Development	Require that 90% of development occurs in UGAs.	Skagit Land Trust
Zoning & Development	Discourage development in floodplains.	Skagit Land Trust
Zoning & Development	Support mixed use development, green spaces, and 15-minute walkable communities.	Skagit Land Trust

## Climate Resilience

### *High Priority Climate Risks*

Participants called out the following climate-intensified hazards as high priority for their organizations and/or communities:

- a. They mentioned that **sea level rise and riverine flooding** are increasing concerns; so are storm-related **winds, flooding, and landslides in alluvial areas**.
- d. **Fire and wildfire smoke** were frequently mentioned as concerns, particularly around the forested lands in Skagit County.
- e. Community 2 Community noted that **wildfire smoke** and **heat domes** have impacted farmworkers' health and earnings the most and impact agricultural products as well. Farmworkers are migrating to Skagit County because it is too hot in places like California.

### *High Priority Areas and Groups*

Participants mentioned the following groups as particularly high priority for policies to focus on:

- Hamilton, Edison, LaConner. Edison and LaConner – these towns are vulnerable to flooding.
- Rural areas, floodplains, and working forests are important to protect, not develop.
- Farmworkers are marginalized, overburdened, and underrepresented.

### *Resilience Policy Areas Feedback*

Participants were first shown a set of possible policy areas for the Climate Element. Then, they answered:

- What specific actions should Skagit County prioritize to strengthen the **preparedness and resilience** of its services (such as Planning, Public Works, Public Health, Parks & Recreation) and the communities they serve in response to climate change-intensified natural hazards?
- What else **should the County keep in mind** as we draft and implement resilience policies for the Climate Element?

The following are the policy recommendations shared:

Sector	Recommendation	Organization
Overarching	Establish an environmental advisory board	Skagit Land Trust
Agriculture & Food Systems	Financially support local farm workers by establishing a fund to replace lost wages and provide emergency housing if needed due to extreme weather.	Community 2 Community
Agriculture & Food Systems	Establish a seat for farmworkers to participate in County policy decision-making, potentially on an advisory board, and provide support for them to participate.	Community 2 Community
Buildings & Energy	Streamline permit systems to facilitate building green infrastructure.	Mark Lundsén
Ecosystems	Analyze permit requests for forest conversions and protect forests from conversion.	Skagit Land Trust, Evergreen Islands
Ecosystems	Establish protections for secondary forests at the same level as protections for industrial forests. Consider buying development rights.	Skagit Land Trust
Ecosystems	Increase funding for conservation futures and expand their usage beyond farmland.	Skagit Land Trust
Ecosystems	Conduct a tree census and preserve trees	Community 2 Community
Ecosystems	Protect shorelines, wetlands, and floodplains	Mark Lundsén, Skagit Watershed Council
Emergency Management	Provide education about risks of owning property in floodplains. Offer assistance for people to make plans to mitigate hazards.	Skagit Land Trust, Mark Lundsén, Evergreen Islands
Emergency Management	Map vulnerable communities and climate hazards to fully understand potential climate impacts on communities. Share the underlying data.	Community 2 Community, Evergreen Islands
Emergency Management	Create public spaces with ample space for families to play, run around, relax, and cook during extreme weather, including during hot, cold, and smoky days.	Community 2 Community
Emergency Management	Establish Skagit County emergency response fund.	Mark Lundsén
Emergency Management	Plan road systems for adequate evacuation routes.	Evergreen Islands
Health & Well-being	Promote and incentivize green industries. Explore opportunities for green jobs for people working at oil refineries.	Mark Lundsén

Health & Well-being	Communicate when algal blooms occur.	Evergreen Islands
Zoning & Development	Do not encourage building in rural areas; maintain farmland, forest land, and conservation as main uses in rural areas.	Skagit Land Trust, Mark Lundsén

### Additional Considerations

Participants mentioned some additional considerations for planning.

- b. **Mitigating climate change and resilience planning is critical.** We need to protect and restore natural systems to slow climate change. Natural ecosystems are carbon sinks.
- c. **It's critical to keep people out of harm's way.** Healthy ecosystems are going to help us adapt better to climate better. We expect more flooding and landslides. There is a cost to inaction around these topics.
- d. **Insurance will be as important as policy** as we think about a changing climate.
- e. **We value the diverse wildlife habitats** in this County. As the Climate Element is developed, we hope there is a recognition of the importance of biodiversity.
- f. **Recognize that funding is important** – restoration projects that help with community resilience can be an efficient use of dollars, more than replacing the same infrastructure.
- g. **The County should avoid offsets** to meet its climate goals.
- h. **Disruptions from climate impacts have real potential to interrupt our ability to feed ourselves locally.** This is an agricultural economy and anything that harms that needs to be looked at, including industrialization.
- i. **It is difficult for farmworkers and other largely non-white populations to participate in all white spaces, and not all spaces are culturally appropriate,** such as all English-language spaces and Roberts Rule spaces. It would be ideal for farmworkers to work in co-governance with the County. It can take support for farmworkers to participate in these spaces.

## Appendix A. Interview Guide

### Introduction

Interviewers and interviewees share name, pronouns, organization, and roles.

Washington House Bill ([HB 1181](#)), passed in 2023, updates the Washington Growth Management Act (GMA) to require cities and counties to integrate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction and climate change resilience policies into comprehensive plan updates. The Climate Element will include two important sub-elements: the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Sub-element and the Resilience Sub-element. The Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Sub-element will include policies that reduce Skagit County's GHG emissions, reduce per-person driving miles, and prioritize actions that benefit overburdened communities. The Resilience Sub-element will include policies that enhance resilience to climate-intensified natural hazards.

We have completed some initial research and community engagement and are currently developing draft policies. On October 22, we will bring draft policies to Skagit County [Planning Commission](#). As part of this phase, we're conducting interviews with community- and climate-related groups. This interview will inform policy development and the final Climate Element.

Interviews with key stakeholders aim to:

- Address gaps in representation, particularly for groups typically excluded from planning processes or those significantly impacted by plan implementation.
- Build community trust by drawing from community lived experience and expertise, and by incorporating feedback from those likely to be impacted by policy changes.

Ground rules:

- There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in participants' honest opinions.

We have 11 questions to cover and 60 minutes. Do you have any questions for me before we get started?

### **Interview Questions**

First, a general question:

1. In your own words, what is your role at your organization and how do you consider your work to be related to climate change?

### **Reducing Emissions**

The next questions will focus on the greenhouse gas emissions reduction sub-element. The Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Sub-element will include policies that reduce Skagit County's GHG emissions, reduce per-person driving miles, and prioritize actions that benefit overburdened communities.

Policy areas could include:

- Support the production of local, clean renewable energy sources such as solar, geothermal, wind, battery energy storage facilities, and pump storage hydro, in areas of the county that would support this use.
- Invest in solar infrastructure on County owned properties and facilities as appropriate.
- Support the adoption and enforcement of regulations that ensure the construction of residential, commercial and industrial buildings use energy-efficient technologies and practices that save energy and costs.
- Support the expansion of electrical vehicle charging infrastructure throughout Skagit county.
- Transition Skagit County's motor pool fleet to electrical vehicles to the greatest extent possible.
- Support the expansion of public transportation and multimodal transportation options such as bike lanes, sidewalks and trails.
- Support the expansion of opportunities to reduce, reuse, and recycle waste materials sustainably.

2. What specific actions should Skagit County prioritize to **reduce its impact on climate change** (e.g., reduce emissions)?

3. What else **should the County keep in mind** as we draft and implement emissions reduction policies for the Climate Element?

### Enhancing Preparedness and Resilience

The next couple of questions will cover climate hazards and possible resilience policies for the Resilience Sub-element.

Examples of climate-intensified natural hazards include drought, extreme rainstorms, flooding, increased pests that threaten crops and trees, heat waves, severe cold weather events, loss of habitat and species, sea level rise, coastal erosion, landslides, wildfires, and wildfire smoke.

4. Given your role/community, which climate-intensified hazards do you believe should be Skagit County's **highest priority to address**, and why?
5. Are there **specific areas or populations** (e.g., low-income communities, rural areas) in Skagit County that you believe will be more impacted than others by these hazards? If so, where and why?

Policy areas in the Resilience sub-element could include:

- Protect community health and wellbeing and ensure that the most vulnerable residents do not bear disproportionate climate impacts.
- Protect and restore natural areas and habitats such as shoreline, wetlands, and floodplains for their social, cultural, economic, and environmental benefits.
- Enhance community preparedness and response to hazards and extreme events, such as through “resilience hub” facilities that support residents, coordinate communication, and distribute resources during heat waves, smoky days, and/or other extreme weather.
- Promote and support incentives to help building owners make building weatherization improvements that bolster climate preparedness and continuity of operations.
- Support and adopt policies and regulations to protect water quality from climate impacts such as sedimentation, algal blooms, and saltwater intrusion.

6. What specific actions should Skagit County prioritize to strengthen the **preparedness and resilience** of its services (such as Planning, Public Works, Public Health, Parks & Recreation) and the communities they serve in response to climate change-intensified natural hazards?

7. What else **should the County keep in mind** as we draft and implement resilience policies for the Climate Element?

### Co-Benefits of Climate Policy

The next question is about co-benefits, which are the additional social, economic, and environmental benefits of a climate policy, aside from reducing GHG emissions or building resiliency to hazards. Examples of co-benefits include improves salmon recovery,



Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.

promotes economic development, promotes equity and justice, provides cost savings, protects tribal treaty rights, improves public health and well-being, improves air quality, builds community knowledge, protects water quality, supports housing supply and diversity. Understanding which co-benefits are valuable to the community will help us prioritize, implement, and communicate about policies.

8. What **co-benefits** are most important to you/your community?

### **Additional Considerations**

The final set of questions will cover any additional considerations for the County to keep in mind through policy development.

9. Does your community face **any barriers to participation** in climate policy planning? If so, how can the County address these barriers?

10. What type of **resources and/or support** would your community benefit the most from (e.g., financial, educational)?

11. Are there **any additional considerations** the County should make as climate policies are developed and implemented?

# Climate Survey

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## Introduction

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Skagit County is adding a Climate Element into its Comprehensive Plan in response to [Washington State House Bill \(HB\) 1181](#), passed in 2023. The Climate Element will include goals and policies to reduce emissions and prepare for climate-intensified natural hazards. This survey aimed to inform the community and gather input on key policy areas for the Climate Element. The survey included six sections: Climate Awareness, Climate Concerns, Policies and Actions, Challenges and Opportunities, Your Connection to Skagit County, and Demographics. The survey was hosted via SurveyMonkey and linked on the County's webpage for the planning effort. It was promoted at the Climate Open House on October 1, 2024. The survey was open from October 11, 2024 through October 31, 2024 and available in English and Spanish. The survey received 652 responses.

After the survey closed, results were analyzed to create this summary. Close-ended questions were reviewed using bar graphs, while open-ended responses were coded into 11-14 categories that captured the majority of themes. Each open-ended response was assigned to one or more categories, as applicable. Key findings were then summarized by combining insights from all the question.

## Key Findings

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Here are the key findings from the Skagit County Climate Element Community Survey:

### 1. Climate Awareness and Concerns

- **High Awareness and Concern:** Most respondents reported being well-informed (53.15%) about climate change issues and thinking about climate change a moderate to a great deal (68.66%). A significant portion (63%) were moderately to extremely concerned about climate-related impacts in their community.
- **Top Climate Concerns:** The top climate concerns, when accounting for responses that reporting slight, somewhat, moderate, and extreme concern, were wildfire (90.53%), wildfire smoke (90.48%), and flooding (89.28%). Respondents identified these as threats to both personal safety and community assets, particularly agricultural lands, homes, and infrastructure.
- **Climate Change Skepticism:** In the open ended responses, a small subset of respondents expressed doubt about the validity of climate change and saw it as exaggerated or politically motivated.

### 2. Challenges in Addressing Climate Impacts

- **Financial Limitations:** In open-ended responses, many mentioned that costs, such as expensive retrofits or high utility bills, limit their ability to adapt their homes or properties to climate risks.
- **Housing Risks:** Many respondents highlighted risks to homes and property, including being in the floodplain, difficulties obtaining insurance, and limited resources for protecting or maintaining homes against extreme weather.
- **Resistance to Government Regulation:** A smaller portion of individuals expressed concerns about government overreach, misuse of power, and inefficiency, feeling that policies could limit personal choice or impose economic burdens.

### 3. Support for Climate Resilience and GHG Reduction Policies

- **Strong Support for Resilience Measures:** A strong majority of respondents (70% or more) either somewhat or strongly favored all of the resilience solutions. Respondents showed high support for policies to promote land use strategies (85.96% strongly or somewhat favor) and enhance community preparedness and

response to hazards and extreme weather events (80.04% strongly or somewhat favor).

- **Emission Reduction Priorities:** The majority of respondents (50% or more) either somewhat or strongly favored all of the GHG emission reduction solutions. Many respondents supported actions such as limiting tree loss, promoting sustainable land management, and working with local industries to reduce pollution from industrial processes. The solution that received the strongest opposition was facilitating the transition to electric vehicles (31.02% strongly or somewhat oppose). However, in open-ended responses, support for EVs, public transportation, and expanding walking and cycling paths was notable.
- **Concerns Over Economic Impact:** In open-ended responses, some respondents voiced caution, seeking assurances that climate policies would not harm local jobs or economic stability, especially in agriculture and small businesses.

#### 4. Suggestions for County Climate Actions

- **Public Transit:** Open-ended responses frequently supported developing public transit options to reduce emissions and provide safe routes for alternative transportation options.
- **Land Use and Zoning:** Open-ended responses often mentioned the need for preserving green spaces and farmland, planting trees, limiting development in hazard prone areas and encouraging dense, mixed-use development.
- **Education and Public Engagement:** Respondents expressed a desire for more education on climate impacts and involvement in policy decisions, with an emphasis on transparent, science-based approaches. Some made calls to ensure policies address the needs of frontline communities and those disproportionately impacted by climate change.
- **Focus on Rural Access:** Some respondents highlighted the unique needs of rural communities, such as access to public transit and rural-specific resources, advocating for a more inclusive approach in policy development.

#### 5. Demographic Insights

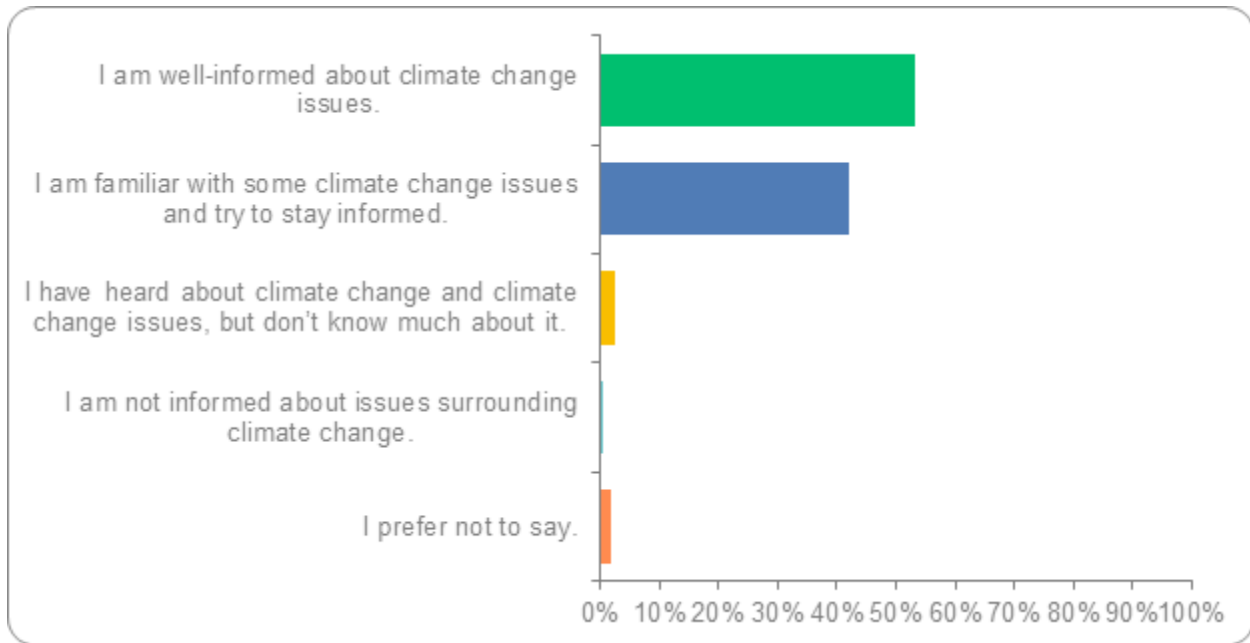
- **Older and More Educated Respondents:** The survey had respondents from various towns within Skagit County, including a diverse range of ages, income levels, and occupations. Survey respondents were predominately white (78.84%), which is reflective of the county's predominantly white population (90%). However, respondents were generally older (55+) and more likely to hold a bachelor's degree or higher when compared to the county's overall population. This suggests that the survey responses may disproportionately reflect the views and priorities of older, formally educated residents. Future outreach efforts could aim to engage younger and more diverse groups to capture a broader spectrum of community perspectives.

## Survey Responses

### Q1: How would you best describe your awareness and understanding of climate change issues?

Answered: 651 Skipped: 1

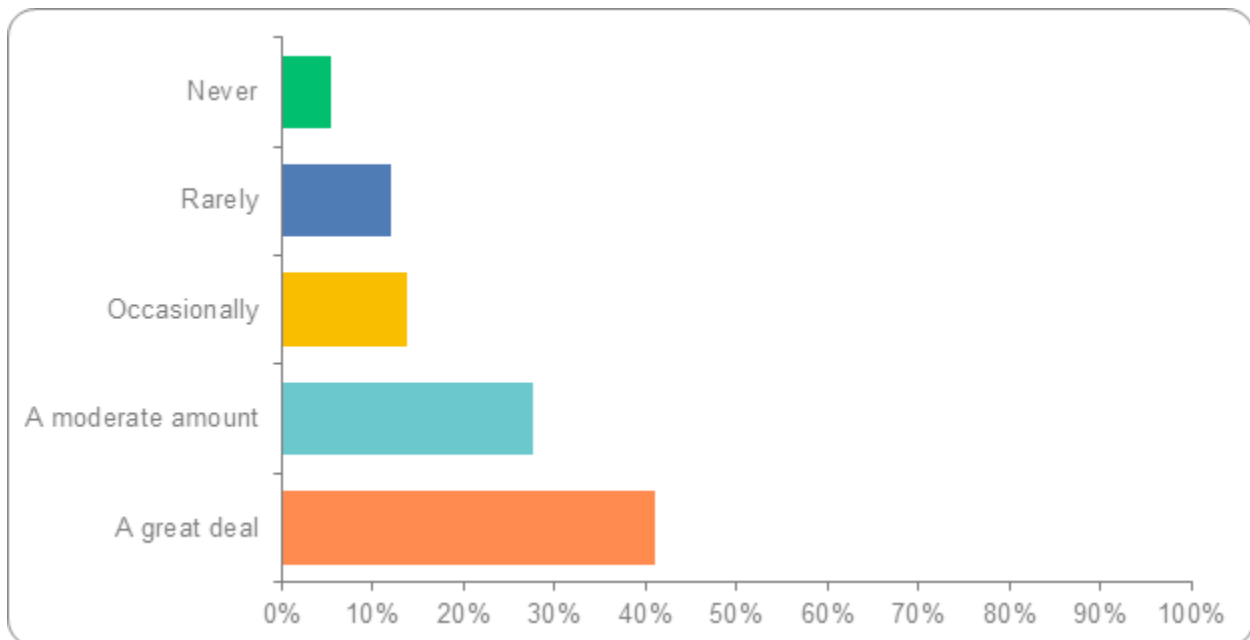
Most respondents feel well-informed (53.15%) or familiar with climate change issues (42.09%), with a smaller portion reporting limited (2.61%) or no knowledge. Only a few preferred not to answer (1.69%).



**Q2: How often do you think about climate change?**

Answered: 651 Skipped: 1

Most respondents think about climate change a great deal (41.01%) or a moderate amount (27.65%), with smaller portions reporting they only think about climate change occasionally (13.82%), rarely (12.14%), or never (5.38%).

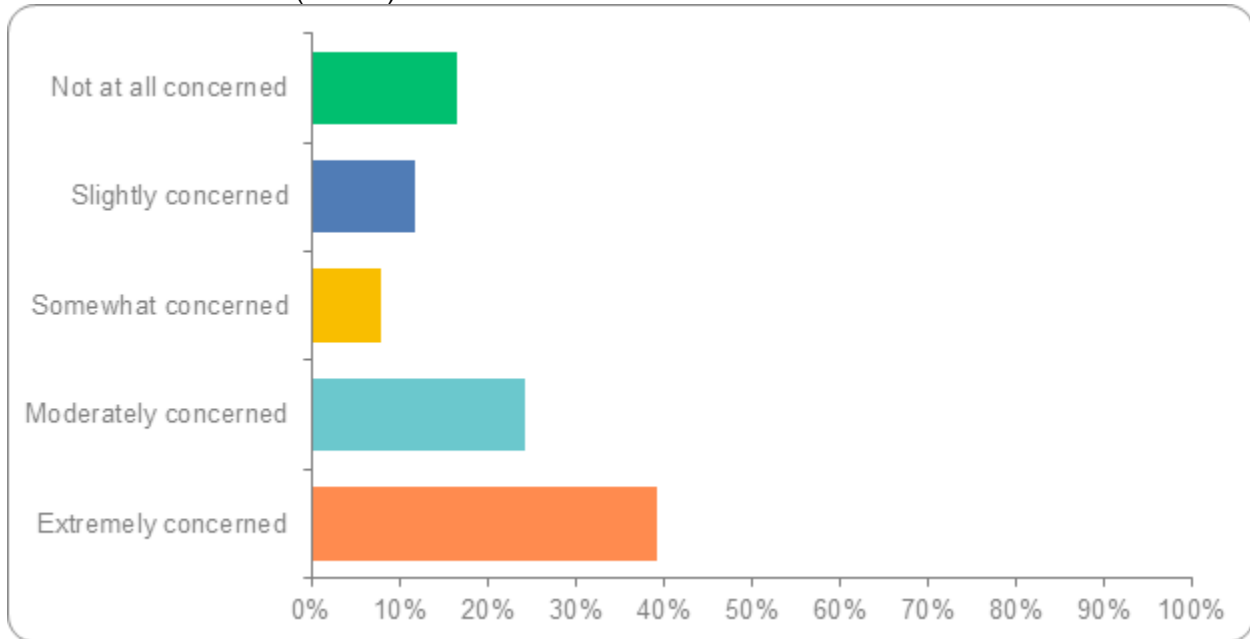


**Q3: Generally, how concerned are you about extreme weather and climate change impacts in your community?**

Answered: 627 Skipped: 25

Most respondents report being either extremely (39.23%) or moderately concerned (24.40%) about extreme weather and climate change impacts, while some report being slightly concerned

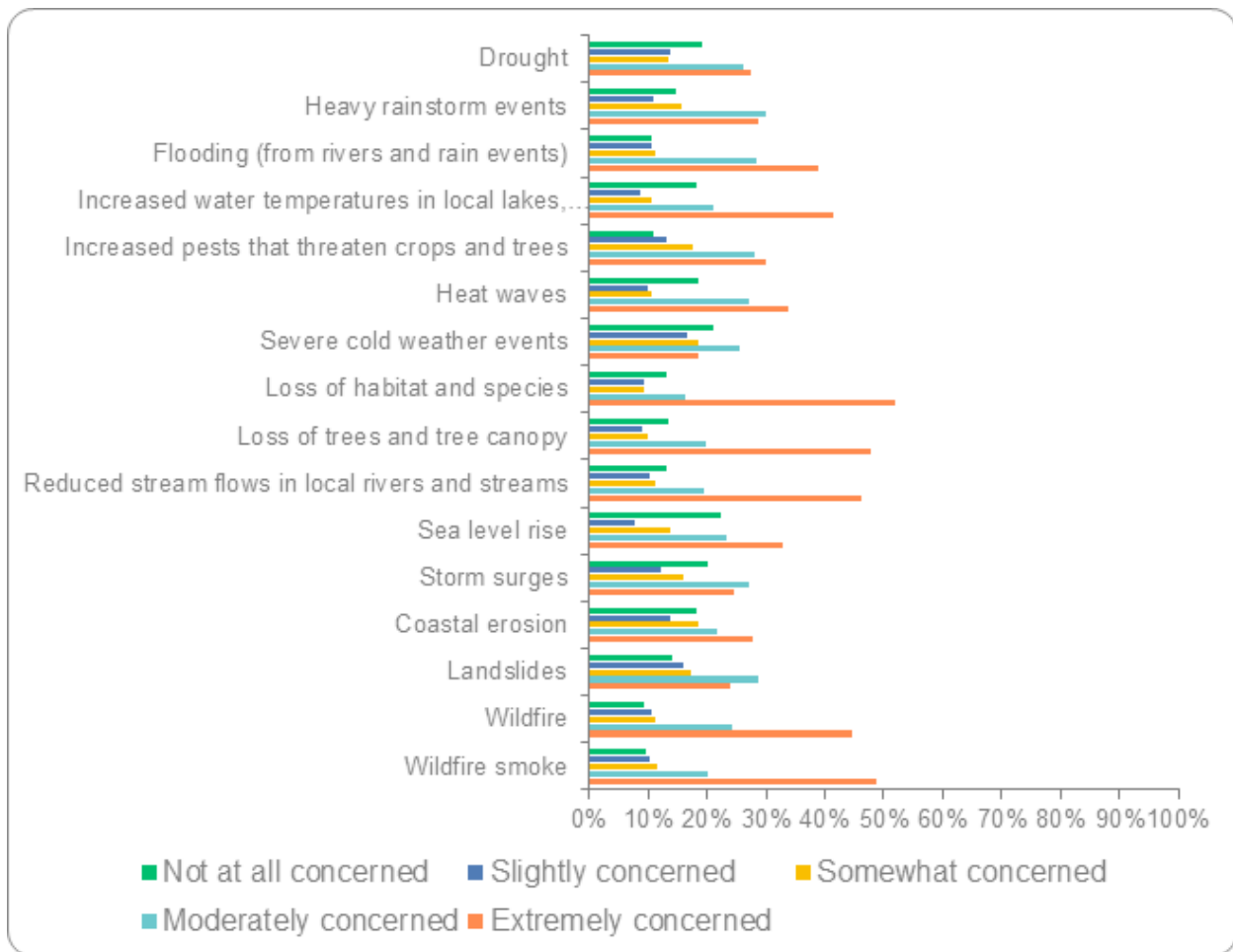
(11.80%) or not at all concerned (16.59%). The smallest portion of respondents report being somewhat concerned (7.97%).



**Q4: How concerned are you with the following extreme weather and climate change impacts in Skagit County? Please indicate your level of concern per impact.**

Answered: 624 Skipped: 28

The majority of respondents (over 50%) report being either extremely or moderately concerned with almost all the extreme weather and climate impacts. Severe cold weather events and coastal erosion were the two notable exceptions. When combining those who are either extremely or moderately concerned, the top climate impact concerns are wildfire smoke (68.87%), wildfire (68.70%), and loss of habitat and species (68.28%). The climate impacts with the least overall concern are severe cold weather events (44.02%), coastal erosion (49.60%), and storm surges (51.78%).



**Q5: Based on your responses to the previous question, tell us more about why you feel this way. Include if you’ve been personally affected by these climate impacts, and which community assets or members you anticipate being most impacted.**

Answered: 458 Skipped: 194

The following are themes and examples quotes from the 458 responses to question 5:

**Concern about Climate Impacts:** Many respondents expressed concern about climate impacts, particularly flooding (97 mentions), wildfire smoke (101 mentions), wildfire (82 mentions), drought (62 mentions), and extreme heat (56 mentions). Other noted impacts included reduced snowpack, sea level rise, habitat loss, and increased pests.

- *“As a fishing and logging family, I’m concerned about the long term sustainability and health of natural resources in our region in the face of heat, drought, etc, like forests and salmon. With other family members, I have concerns about heat waves and severe weather events and with older folks and kids with asthma, air quality issues from pollution and wildfire smoke has been an issue.”*

**Personal Experiences:** Many shared firsthand accounts of extreme weather, particularly heatwaves and flooding, and described challenges to their health, homes, and work, especially in agriculture.

- *“My house on Lafayette Rd flooded in Nov 2021 when the Skagit river flooded and my current home was threatened by an early brush fire in April of 2024.”*

**Vulnerable Communities and Critical Assets:** Respondents frequently highlighted risks to specific communities—such as youth, the elderly, farmers, Tribal/Indigenous populations, low-

income groups, those with limited English proficiency, and those with respiratory issues—and to critical assets like agricultural land, salmon, forests, and shellfish. Concern for these groups and assets was mentioned 118 times.

- *“...I’m acutely aware of the negative implications of climate change on the valley. Farmers will be heavily impacted. Low- and middle-class families and individuals are at risk...Everyone will be impacted, right now the elderly are especially vulnerable.”*

**Climate Skepticism:** A subset of responses (74 mentions) reflected skepticism about climate change, ranging from doubts about its severity to views that it is politically motivated.

- *“Climate change is a hoax.”*
- *“Concern is overblown to facilitate political desires.”*

**Limited Concern or Irrelevance:** A small number of respondents (10 mentions) expressed no concern about climate change, while others (11 mentions) provided responses that did not fit into other categories or were too vague to categorize.

- *“Not worried.”*

In order to capture the key themes from question 5, responses were coded into 11 categories that captured the majority of themes. Each open-ended response was assigned to one or more categories, as applicable. The following table reflects the major themes and their instances in response to question 5:

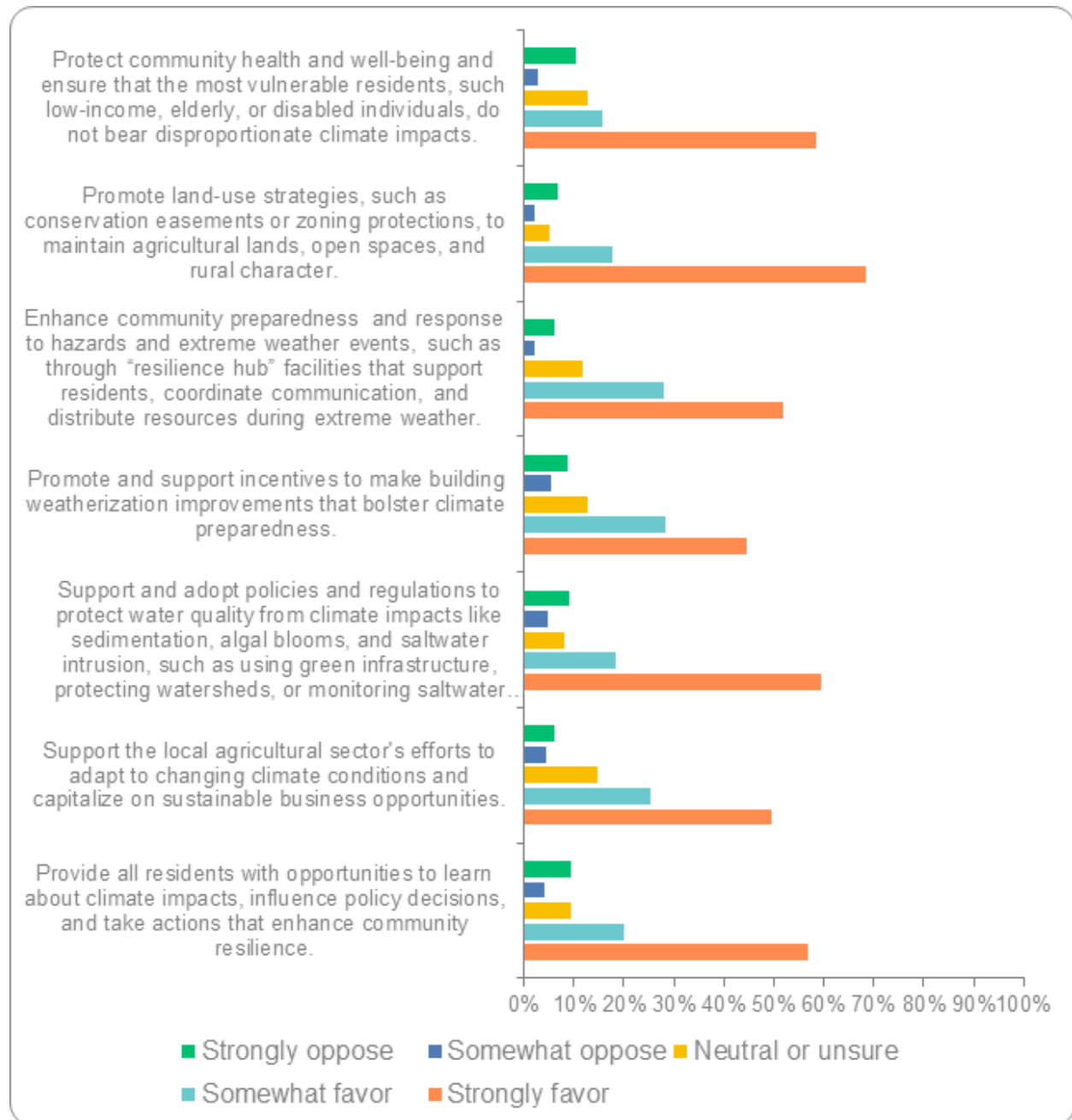
Q5	Instances
Concern for Specific Assets or Groups	118
Other Climate Impacts	115
Wildfire Smoke	101
Flooding	97
General Concern	87
Wildfire	82
Climate Skepticism	74
Drought	62
Extreme Heat	56
Miscellaneous/Other	11
Not concerned	10

**Q6: Please indicate your level of support for each of the following types of resilience solutions intended to prepare Skagit County for extreme weather and climate impacts.**

Answered: 593 Skipped: 59

All of the resilience solutions received strong support from survey respondents (over 70% either somewhat or strongly favor). The solutions that received the most support were promoting land use strategies (85.96% strongly or somewhat favor) and enhancing community preparedness and response to hazards and extreme weather events (80.04% strongly or somewhat favor).

The solutions that received the strongest opposition were incentives to make building weatherization improvements (14.21% somewhat or strongly oppose) and policies and regulations to protect water quality (14.09% somewhat or strongly oppose).



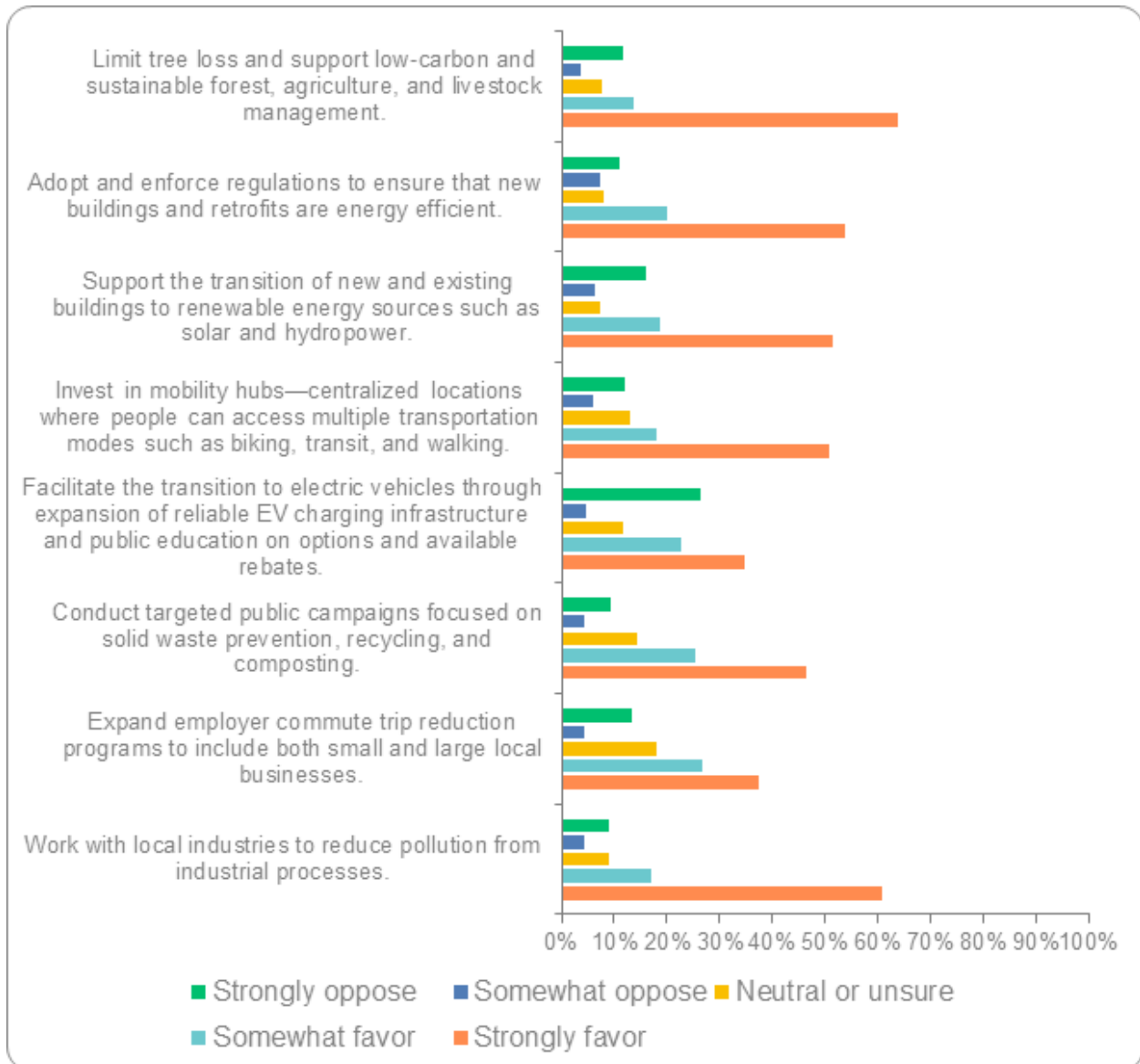
**Q7: Please indicate your level of support for each of the following types of GHG emission reduction solutions intended to reduce Skagit County’s contributions to climate change.**

Answered: 594 Skipped: 58

The majority of respondents either somewhat or strongly favored all of the GHG emission reduction solutions. The solutions with the most support included working with local industries to reduce pollution from industrial processes (77.83% strongly or somewhat favor) and limiting tree loss and supporting low-carbon and sustainable forest, agriculture, and livestock management (77.33% strongly or somewhat favor). The solutions that received the strongest opposition were facilitate the transition to electric vehicles (31.02% strongly or somewhat oppose) and support



the transition of new and existing buildings to renewable energy sources (22.30% strongly or somewhat oppose).



## **Q8: Please describe any challenges or barriers you and/or your household/family may face in addressing extreme weather and impacts from climate change.**

Answered: 334 Skipped: 318

The following are themes and examples quotes from the 334 responses:

**Financial Barriers:** The most frequently mentioned challenge (97 mentions) was the high cost of resilience measures, such as heat pumps, home retrofits, or flood insurance. Many noted these costs were prohibitive, even with subsidies or assistance.

- *“Updating our home to withstand climate change is expensive. We are not low income so we don’t qualify for many programs and out of pocket and home loans would be our only way to ensure our home is ready and energy efficient.”*

**Housing and Property Risks or Limitations:** Respondents (71 mentions) highlighted risks to homes and property, including being in the floodplain, difficulties obtaining insurance, and limited resources for protecting or maintaining homes against extreme weather.

- *“Our house is 112 years old and has little insulation, no air conditioning, and the summers are getting very tough during smoke season.”*
- *“We live near the coast just above sea level. Given the housing market, we can’t afford to move farther inland to avoid impacts of flooding even if we wanted to.”*

**Emergency Preparedness and Safety:** Challenges included concerns around emergency preparedness (36 mentions), such as from power loss, availability of emergency supplies, and evacuation challenges.

- *“Flooding on access roads so we cannot leave to get to safe areas or emergency vehicles cannot get to us.”*

**Infrastructure Limitations:** Respondents also mentioned infrastructure limitations (31 mentions), such as a lack of bike paths, poorly maintained dikes, and limited access to alternative energy for multifamily homes.

- *I bicycle but Skagit County needs to plan for and build safe routes from rural areas into the cities/towns and make safe routes/bike paths in the cities/towns so I can bicycle to get groceries, etc without fear of vehicles running me down.”*

**Natural Resource and Environmental Management:** 21 respondents mentioned concerns with natural resource and environmental management, such as water, dike, and forest management.

- *“Lack of active and effective forest management is detrimental to the County and WA generally. It unnecessarily endangers people, livestock and industry.”*

**Lack of Community or Government Support:** A lack of adequate community and government support (32 mentions) was frequently cited, with concern around climate skepticism in the community and calls for more government intervention.

- *“So far, the primary barrier to addressing impacts from climate change has been the lack of county leadership on this issue.”*
- *“Climate denial and misinformation in general are the biggest threats we have in my view.”*

**Climate Skepticism and Distrust in Government:** As previously noted, a subset of respondents (16 mentions) expressed skepticism or denial of climate change, questioning its validity or framing it as politically motivated. 18 responses reflected distrust of government policies, with concerns about overreach, inefficiency, or burdensome regulations.

- *“There are no barriers. Climate Change is a farce.”*
- *“The only challenge we have with climate change is that the government, both local and federal, makes mandates that are pointless and simply stand to be a drain on the citizens of this country.”*

**Health and Aging:** Health-related barriers (13 mentions) such as asthma and challenges associated with aging and mobility (12 mentions) were highlighted.

- *“Challenges for me are my advancing age and the slow downs that come with that and the fact I have a rare disease limiting me.”*

**No barriers:** 32 respondents reported facing no barriers at all.

- *“I have not had any challenges or barriers due to climate change.”*

In order to capture the key themes from question 8, responses were coded into 12 categories that captured the majority of themes. Each open-ended response was assigned to one or more categories, as applicable. The following table reflects the major themes and their instances in response to question 8:

Q8	Instances
Financial	97
Housing/Property Risks and Limitations	71
Emergency Preparedness and Safety	36
Lack of Community or Government Support	32
No barriers	32
Infrastructure Limitations	31
Natural Resource and Environmental Management	21
Government Distrust	18
Climate Skepticism	16
Miscellaneous/Other	16
Health	13
Aging and Mobility Issues	12

### **Q9: What specific actions or changes do you think would most help Skagit County reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience to climate change impacts?**

Answered: 378 Skipped: 274

The following are themes and examples quotes from the 378 responses:

**Transportation and Transit Improvements:** The most frequently mentioned actions (140 responses) included expanding public transit, improving bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and providing electric vehicle (EV) incentives to reduce emissions from transportation.

- *“Expand and encourage public transportation, EV conversion of ALL county vehicles, and construction of SAFE bicycle lanes from high density residential areas to city centers. Provide bicycle racks, lockers or other secure areas in specific destinations (libraries, Big Box Stores, Municipal Buildings) to encourage bicycling by county residents.”*

**Land Use and Zoning:** 78 respondents advocated for land use and zoning changes, such as prioritizing dense, mixed-use, transit-oriented development and preserving natural areas and farmlands to minimize emissions and protect ecosystems.

- *“More compact development in cities supported by stronger bike/ped networks and public transit; less development in rural areas subject to floods, wildlife, etc.”*

**Renewable Energy and Waste Infrastructure:** 73 responses suggested increasing solar, wind, and other renewable energy projects, as well as updating waste infrastructure to support emission reductions.

- *“In order for the County to reduce its GHG emissions, it should invest in the production of renewable energy in Skagit County”*

**Building Efficiency and Electrification:** 53 respondents encouraged improving energy efficiency in buildings and transitioning to electric appliances and systems.

- *“Retrofit buildings with electric heating and cooling. Stop allowing new buildings to use fossil fuels for heating and cooling and promote solar on large energy users.”*

**Agriculture and Forestry Practices:** 56 responses focused on sustainable farming, forestry practices, and carbon sequestration initiatives to reduce emissions and promote resilience.

- *“Focus on supporting farmers to be resilient in the face of a changing climate - building soil organic matter, reducing run off, diversifying operations, research for best practices, etc.”*

**Education and Public Awareness:** 37 respondents emphasized the need for community education on climate action and its importance in addressing emissions and resilience.

- *“Educate the public about the realities of how climate change affects us locally - droughts, more coverage of wildfires and smoke.”*

**Emergency Preparedness and Resilience Planning:** 34 responses highlighted the importance of preparing for natural disasters and building resilience to climate hazards.

- *“I think the best course of action is for our County's Emergency System (Fire, Ambulance, Hospital/Medical, Police) Departments to be as fully trained and ready as possible for any and all catastrophic events, so they need to be adequately funded. I also am a firm believer in neighbor helping neighbor so it would behoove this County to encourage folks, who are willing, to volunteer to receive training in emergency response should the need ever arise for their assistance.”*

**Regulating Industry:** 23 respondents suggested regulating or closing refineries and other polluting corporations to reduce industrial emissions.

- *“Shut down the refinery.”*

**Distrust and Skepticism:** As previously noted, some respondents criticized government overreach and inefficiency (30 mentions). 19 respondents expressed doubt about climate change or its human causes. On occasion, these sentiments were voiced together.

- *“Hopefully common sense will prevent the waste of taxpayer's money being spent on "green" agenda items that ultimately accomplish nothing beneficial.”*

In order to capture the key themes from question 9, responses were coded into 12 categories that captured the majority of themes. Each open-ended response was assigned to one or more categories, as applicable. The following table reflects the major themes and their instances in response to question 9:

Q9	Instances
Transportation and Transit Improvements	140
Land Use and Zoning	78
Renewable Energy and Waste Infrastructure	73
Agriculture and Forestry Practices	56
Building Efficiency and Electrification	53
Education and Public Awareness	37
Miscellaneous/Other	37
Emergency Preparedness and Resilience Planning	34

Government Distrust or Desire to Limit	30
Regulate Industry	23
Climate Skepticism	19
Equity and Inclusion	3

### Q10: Is there anything else you would like us to consider for the development of the Climate Element as part of Skagit County’s Comprehensive Plan update?

Answered: 302 Skipped: 350

The following are themes and examples quotes from the 302 responses:

**Land Use and Zoning:** 50 mentions emphasized concerns about farmland preservation, urban planning, and limiting development in sensitive areas.

- *“Focus on sustainable development and growth, with an emphasis on high density building strategies in urban areas and high traffic corridors and medium to lower density the further you are from those areas.”*

**Urgency and Action:** 38 mentions called for immediate action and acknowledgment of the climate crisis as a pressing issue.

- *“Act fast. Not every solution will be right. But lack of action is an action and it is likely to be deadly. Perfect is the enemy of good here. We need to take good actions quickly.”*

**Economic Concerns:** 32 mentions raised concerns about costs, affordability, and potential economic impacts of proposed actions.

- *“All of this is expensive. We need to develop accounting systems that measure upstream and downstream costs and ensure that unintended actions and decisions are paid for by the polluters.”*

**Renewable Energy and Waste Infrastructure:** 32 mentions suggested increasing renewable energy such as solar and wind, and improving waste infrastructure to reduce emissions.

- *“Focus on renewable energy and allowing wind and solar farms.”*
- *“Assist and incentivize consumers to recycle and reuse.”*

**Community Involvement and Education:** 26 mentions suggested greater collaboration with local residents or organizations and enhancing public education efforts.

- *“Get more people informed and involved.”*

**Transportation and Transit Improvements:** 22 mentions included suggestions to reduce vehicle emissions, improve public transit, and expand alternative transportation options like cycling and walking.

- *“Increase bus routes and increase incentives (including low or no cost service) to reduce single occupancy vehicle use.”*

**Addressing Climate Impacts:** 16 mentions highlighted specific impacts, like flooding and sea level rise, as critical considerations for resilience planning.

- *“Identify areas where retreat from relative sea level rise may be the most cost effective approach and plan accordingly for those areas.”*

**Agriculture and Forestry Practices:** 11 mentions focused on sustainable farming and forestry practices to reduce emissions and promote resilience.

- *“Please please please take care of our forests. They deserve it. They are the means of our survival.”*

**Increase or Enforce Government Regulations:** 12 mentions called for better enforcement of current regulations and suggested increasing government regulations and resources.

- *“Enforce building codes. Don’t allow exceptions.”*

**Distrust and Skepticism:** Some respondents criticized government overreach and inefficiency, and voiced concerns about spending taxpayers’ money (38 mentions). 16 respondents reflected

skepticism about climate change, ranging from doubts about its severity to views that it is politically motivated.

- “Stop looking for ways to spend taxpayer money. Look for ways to save taxpayers money.”
- “Look into the possibility that the whole climate change agenda is political and a power grab.”

**Scientific Basis:** 6 mentions urged grounding decisions in science and called for a broader review of data sources.

- “Consider all sources of scientific knowledge on the topic of climate.”

**Equity and Inclusion:** 6 mentions emphasized ensuring that climate actions address the needs of frontline communities and Tribes.

- “Center the needs and voices of those furthest from climate justice and those most impacted by climate change - farmworkers, immigrants & refugees, people of color, people living in poverty.”

In order to capture the key themes from question 10, responses were coded into 14 categories that captured the majority of themes. Each open-ended response was assigned to one or more categories, as applicable. The following table reflects the major themes and their instances in response to question 10:

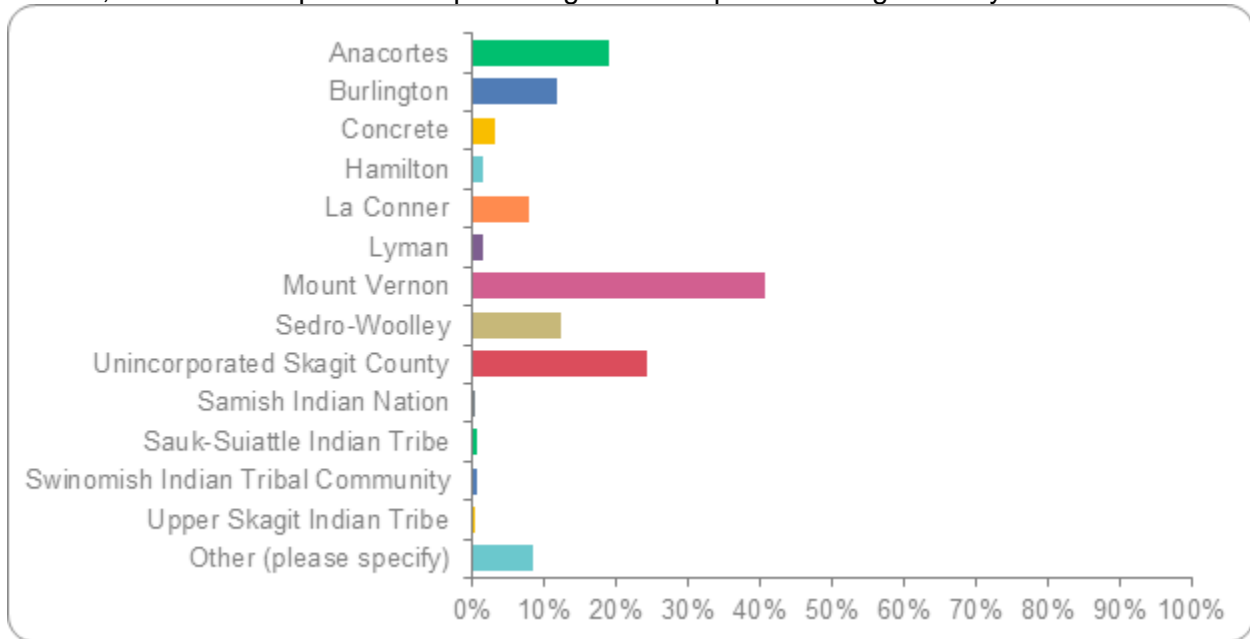
Q10	Instances
Land Use and Zoning	50
Government Distrust or Desire to Limit	38
Climate Urgency and Action	38
Miscellaneous/Other	33
Economic Concerns	32
Renewable Energy and Waste Infrastructure	32
Community Involvement and Education	26
Transportation and Transit Improvements	22
Climate Skepticism	16
Addressing Climate Impacts	16
Increase/Enforce Gov. Regulations and Resources	12
Agriculture and Forestry Practices	11
Scientific Basis	6
Equity and Inclusion	6

## Connection to Skagit County and Demographic Survey Responses

**Q11: Please tell us where you live or work in Skagit County and/or provide your Tribal affiliation. (Select all that apply)**

Answered: 576 Skipped: 76

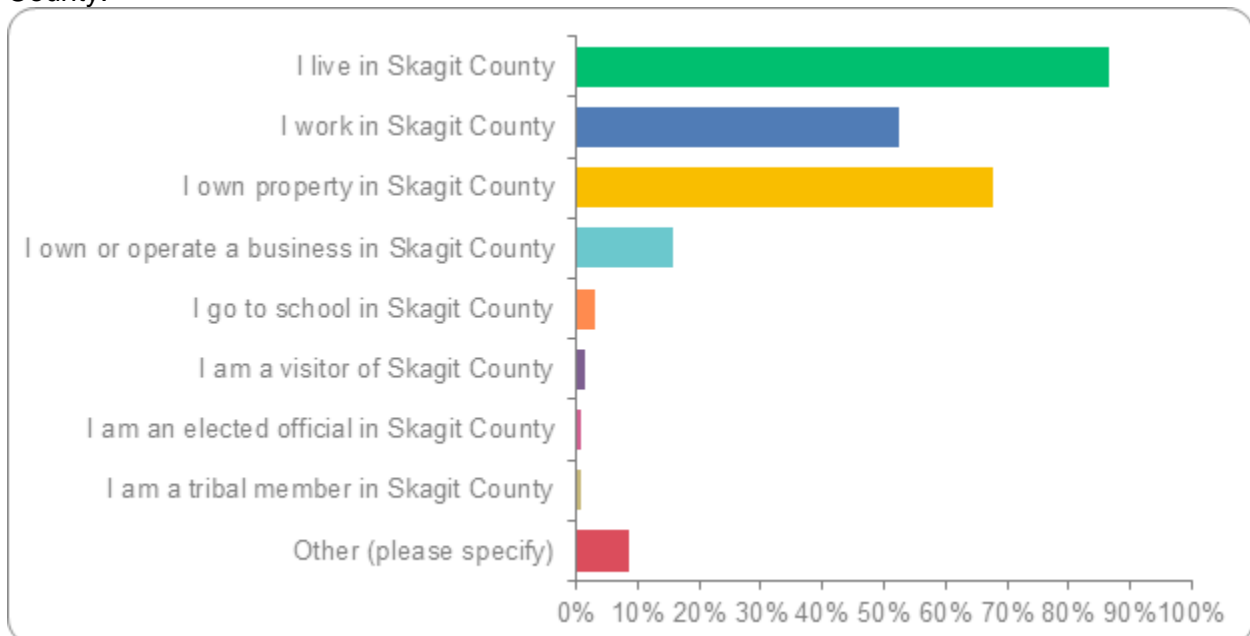
A significant portion of respondents (40.80%) report living in Mount Vernon. Following Mount Vernon, 24.31% of respondents report living in unincorporated Skagit County.



**Q12: Which of the following best defines your role in your community? (Select all that apply)**

Answered: 576 Skipped: 76

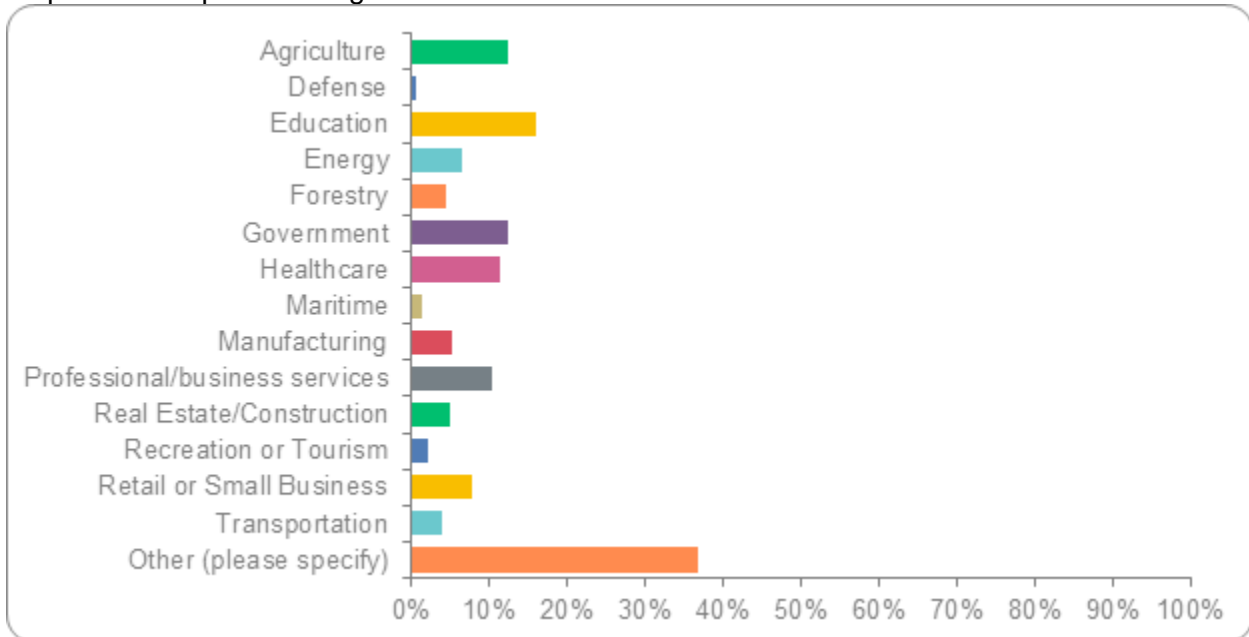
The majority of respondents live (86.63%) work (52.43%), and own property (67.88%) in Skagit County.



**Q13: What industry do you work in? (Select all that apply)**

Answered: 542 Skipped: 110

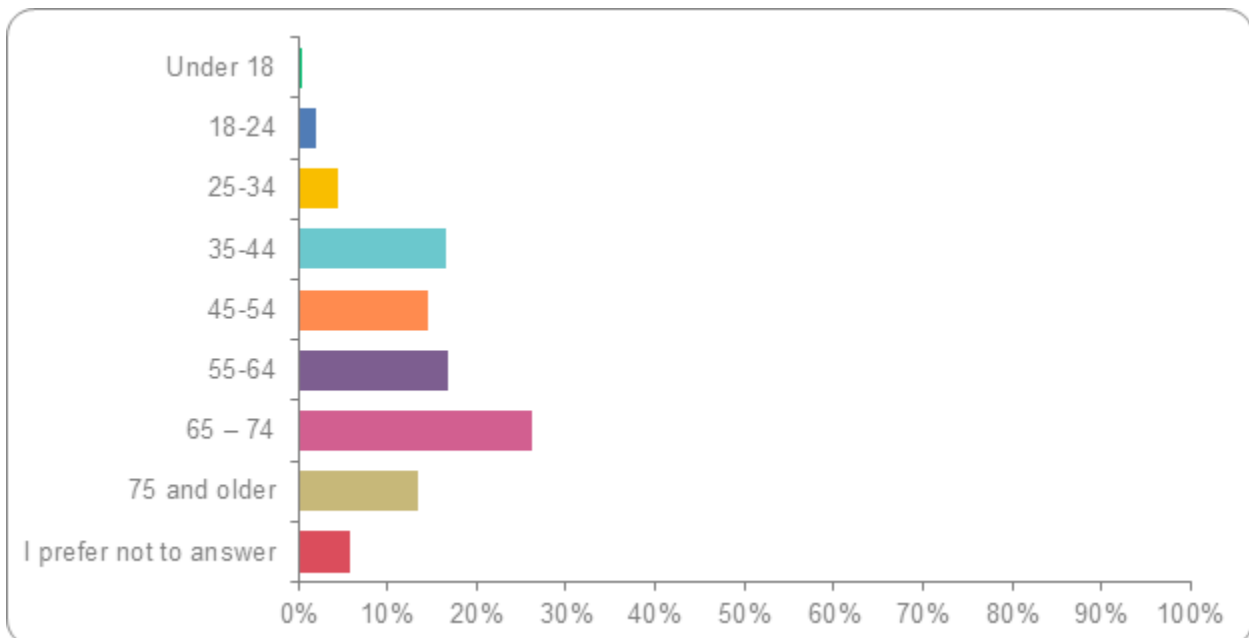
The industry with the highest percentage was other (36.9%), followed by education (16.05%). Individuals who marked other report working in fields like journalism and nonprofit. 17.8% of respondents reported being retired.



#### Q14: What is your age?

Answered: 575 Skipped: 77

The majority of respondents were 55 years and older (56.18%).

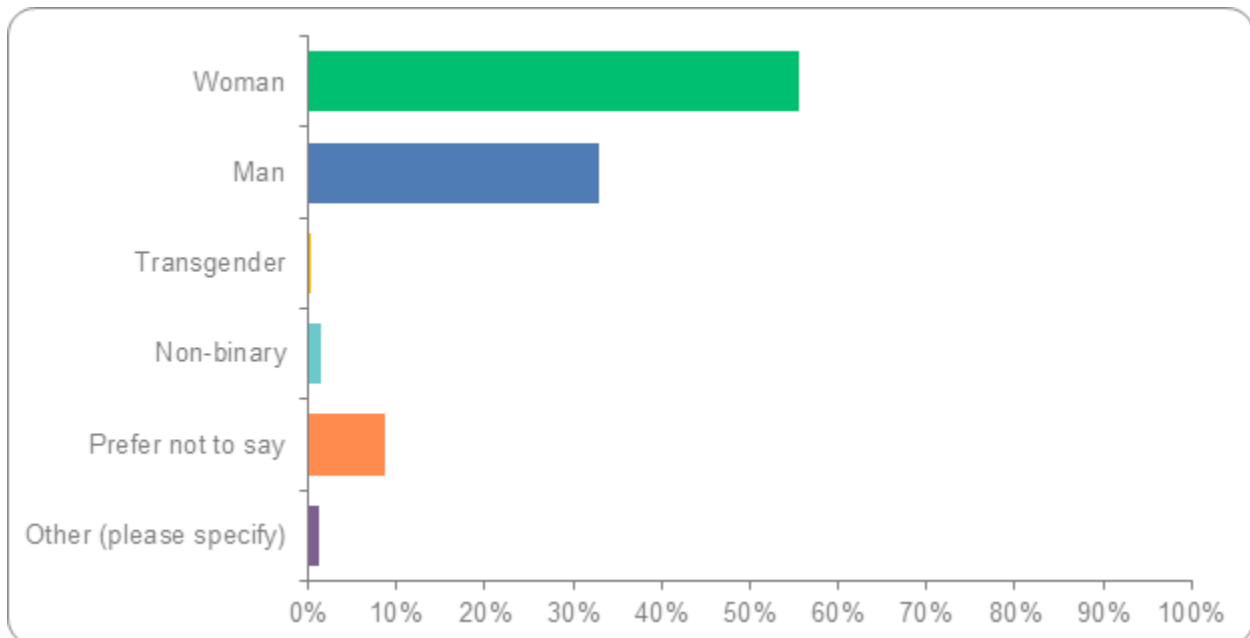


#### Q15: What is your gender?

Answered: 569 Skipped: 83

A slight majority of respondents identified as women (55.54%).

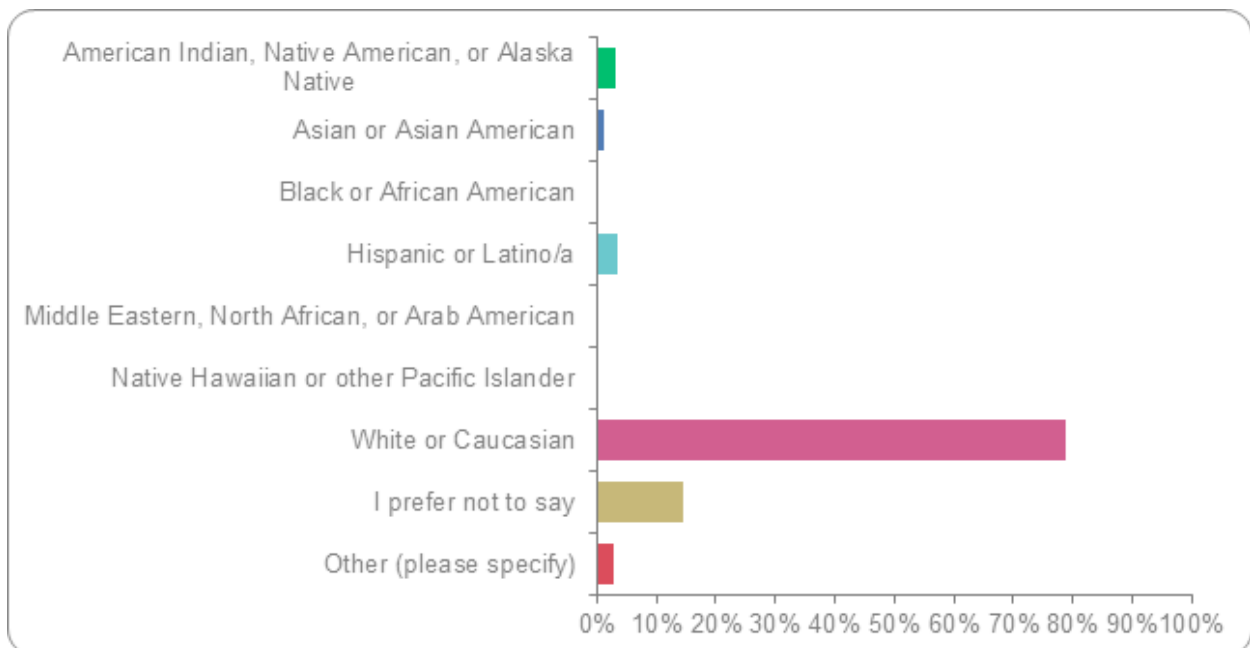




**Q16: What is your race/ethnicity? (Select all that apply)**

Answered: 567 Skipped: 85

A majority of respondents identified as white or caucasian (78.84%).

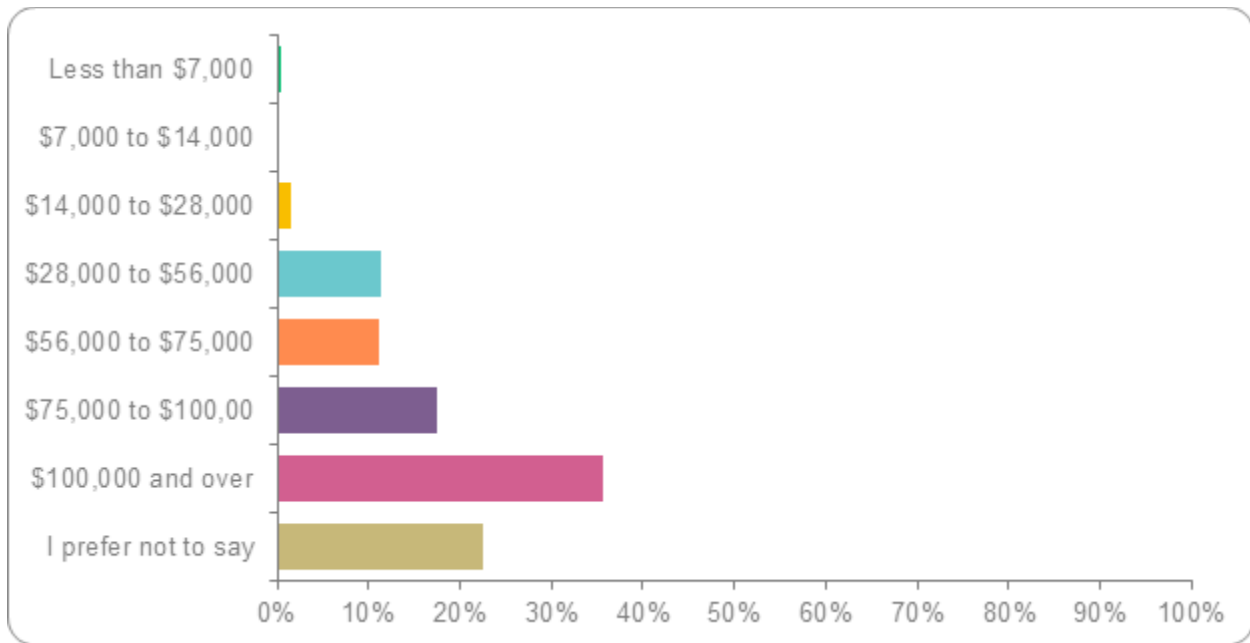


**Q17: What is your approximate household income?**

Answered: 568 Skipped: 84

A majority of respondents report a household income of \$75,000 or more per year (52.99%).

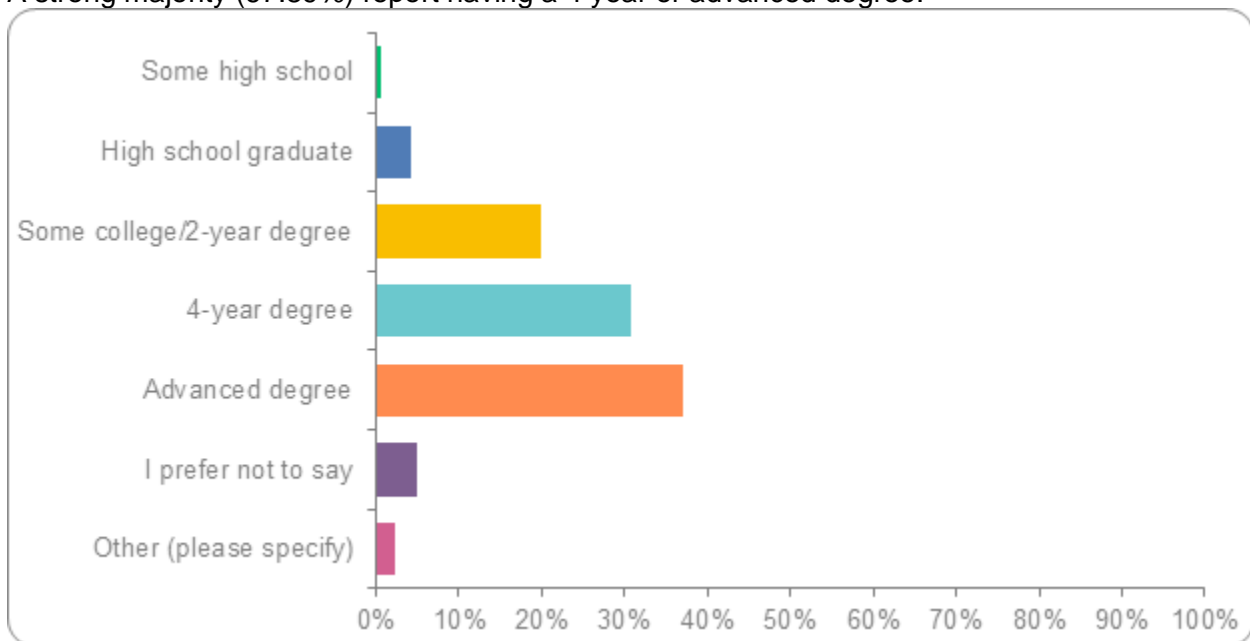
Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.



### Q18: What is your highest level of education?

Answered: 573 Skipped: 79

A strong majority (67.89%) report having a 4 year or advanced degree.



## Next Steps

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Between February 2025 to June 2026 Skagit County Planning Commission will hold several briefings open to the public and public hearings with additional comment periods in March. After

Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.

the public hearing and comment period in March the Skagit County Board of County Commissioners will hold a public hearing and comment period.

## Appendices

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### Appendix A. First Survey Results

Survey results exported from Survey Monkey start on the next page.

Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.

## Appendix B. Stakeholder List

Organization	Website	Contact
Agricultural Advisory Committee	<a href="#">Link to Website</a>	Malia Agpawa
Skagit County Drainage and Irrigation Consortium		Jenna Friebel
Forestry Advisory Committee	<a href="#">Link to Website</a>	Kendra Smith
Marine Resource Center	<a href="#">Link to Website</a>	Tracy Alker
Skagit Habitat for Humanity	<a href="#">Link to Website</a>	Tina Tate
Helping Hands Foodbank	<a href="#">Link to Website</a>	Rebecca Skrinde
Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County	<a href="#">Link to Website</a>	John Sternlicht
Skagit/Island Counties Builders Association	<a href="#">Link to Website</a>	Wayne Crider
Skagit County Farmers		Tony Wisdom, Skagit Valley Farm Diane Szukovathy, Jello Mold Farm Jason Vander Kooy Harmony Dairy Amy Frye, Boldly Grown Farms

## Appendix C. Stakeholder Interview Questions

Participants were provided these questions ahead of stakeholder interviews but were not asked to fill out the form and return them. The stakeholder interviews were structured in a discussion format to foster open and honest conversations.

Questions for the 2025 Skagit County Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update

### Land Use

1. What are your primary concerns regarding planning for population growth in Skagit County over the next 20 years?
2. What is Skagit County currently doing to manage growth that you hope will continue for the next 20 years?
3. What is Skagit County currently doing to manage its natural resources and working lands (forest and farmland) that you hope will continue for the next 20 years?
4. Can you think of any planning efforts or services that Skagit County should consider incorporating in the future to help improve your quality of life?

### Housing

1. On a scale of 1-7 where 1 is *not at all*, 4 is *somewhat* and 7 is *extremely*, to what extent are you concerned about housing affordability in Skagit County?

Not at all Somewhat Extremely

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

2. Washington State law requires Skagit County to allow zoning for affordable housing within the unincorporated areas of the County.
3. Where would you advise Skagit County to focus planning for additional housing, particularly affordable housing, located outside of our existing cities and towns?
4. Using that same 7-point scale, to what extent would you support Skagit County focusing multiple-family housing and affordable housing in the County's existing LAMRIDs (Limited Area of More Intensive Rural Development)? – e.g., within Clear Lake, Edison, Big Lake, and Alger.

Not at all Somewhat Completely

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

5. Are there areas in Skagit County that should not be utilized for more intense housing development? If so, where?

### Transportation

1. To what extent do you feel Skagit County is able to plan for and meet your transportation needs?

Not at all Somewhat Extremely

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

Please explain:

2. Thinking of transportation infrastructure and the needs in the unincorporated areas of Skagit County (outside of cities or towns) - What transportation options and opportunities would you like to see Skagit County aim for in the next 20 years?
3. Skagit County is required by State law to come up with ways to reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled in the County.
4. What ideas do you have about how Skagit County can achieve this?

### Climate Change

1. To what extent are you concerned about climate intensified hazards such as drought, sea level rise, wildfires, or increased frequency and severity of floods in Skagit County?

Not at all Somewhat Extremely

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

2. Skagit County is required by State Law to plan for climate intensified natural hazards such as extreme temperatures, wildfires, increased flooding, sea level rise, etc.
3. Which of the climate change intensified natural hazards (*review list above*) do you feel Skagit County should focus on as the highest priority? Why?
4. Are there specific areas or populations in Skagit County that you believe will be more impacted by these hazards? If so, where/why?
5. Considering the various governmental services provided by Skagit County (Planning, Public Works, Public Health, Parks & Recreation, etc.), what specific actions can Skagit County take to enhance the preparedness and resilience of these services and the populations they serve in response to climate change-induced natural hazards?
6. What actions do you think Skagit County government should prioritize to enhance its preparedness and resiliency to changing climate?

Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.

## **Appendix D. Stakeholder Interview Discussion Boards**

Stakeholder interview discussion boards start on the next page.

## Appendix E. June 2024 Open House Notices and Advertisements

To advertise for the June open houses, Skagit County issued a press release on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Notifications were uploaded to social media websites, like Facebook, and emails were sent out to survey respondents that requested to receive notifications about future Comprehensive Plan engagement opportunities. Advertisements for the open were distributed in both English and Spanish. Spanish translation services were available at all three events.



### SKAGIT COUNTY 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update

Casas Abierta

20, 26, y 27 de Junio

**Anacortes Depot Arts and  
Community Center**  
Jueves, 20 de Junio  
5:30PM-7:00PM  
611 R Avenue  
Anacortes, WA 98221

**Sedro-Woolley Community  
Center**  
Miércoles, 26 de Junio  
5:30PM-7:00PM  
703 Pacific Street  
Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284

**Concrete High School**  
Jueves, 27 de Junio  
5:30PM-7:00PM  
7830 S Superior Ave  
Concrete, WA 98237

Skagit County los invita a el primer serio de exhibiciones públicas “Casas Abierta” para el actualizo 2025 del Plan Integral de Skagit County. El intento de las exhibiciones públicas es educar el público sobre el proceso del plan integral, cambios importantes en las leyes, y para coleccionar comentario del público sobre el desarrollo de nuevo políticos y metas en el plan integral. Visite este sitio web: [www.skagitcounty.net/2025CPA](http://www.skagitcounty.net/2025CPA) por más información y para subscribirse a las actualizaciones progreso del Plan Integral.



Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.



## SKAGIT COUNTY 2025

### Comprehensive Plan Update

Open Houses

June 20, 26, 27, 2024

**Join us for the first series of open houses to learn about and contribute to Skagit County's 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update.**

#### Why Attend?

**Learn:** Find out about the comprehensive plan process and why it matters.

**Updates:** Hear about important changes in state law affecting the plan.

**Contribute:** Share your feedback to help shape the county's future goals and policies.

#### Open House Details:

**Format:** Walk-in with engagement activities and educational posters.

**Experts:** Skagit County staff and other experts will be available to answer your questions.

**No Formal Presentation:** Drop by anytime during the open houses.

#### How to Get Involved:

**Visit the Website:** Go to [www.skagitcounty.net/2025CPA](http://www.skagitcounty.net/2025CPA) for more details.

**Sign Up:** Register on the website to receive updates about the comprehensive plan update project.

Your input is vital. Help us plan the future of Skagit County by attending the open houses and sharing your thoughts. We look forward to seeing you there!

<b>Anacortes Depot Arts &amp; Community Center</b> Thursday, June 20th 5:30PM-7:00PM 611 R Avenue Anacortes, WA	<b>Sedro-Woolley Community Center</b> Wednesday, June 26th 5:30PM-7:00PM 703 Pacific Street Sedro-Woolley, WA	<b>Concrete High School</b> Thursday, June 27th 5:30PM-7:00PM 7830 S Superior Ave Concrete, WA
<b>Transit:</b> Available upon request. Text 360-399-2552 stop 2332 on Route 409 or route 410.	<b>Transit:</b> Route 300, bus stop 5157, runs until ~ 7:30pm. Route 301 Burlington to Sedro-Woolley, bus stop 5157 runs until ~ 7:30pm.	<b>Transit:</b> Route 717 (flex route) runs until ~ 7:30pm. Route 70X Concrete to Mount Vernon runs to stop 5134. (8-minute walk to location).
Visit Skagit Transit website or call 360-757-4433		

Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.

ounty.net/Departments/Home/press/061324.htm



June 13, 2024

### Skagit County to Host Series of Comprehensive Plan Update Open Houses

Skagit County Planning and Development Services will be hosting a series of open houses over the next three weeks as an opportunity for the community to learn about and contribute to Skagit County's 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update. The Comprehensive Plan serves as a vital roadmap for the future growth and development of Skagit County over the next twenty years and acts as a framework to guide the day-to-day land use decisions by elected officials and local government staff. During the open houses, community members can expect to hear more about the following topics:

- Revising development regulations relating to land use, natural resources lands, rural character, and environment, to ensure they are compliant with new state laws and reflect our community's priorities.
- Developing goals and policies to encourage housing affordable to all income levels.
- Updating transportation plans to support future road improvements and additional modes of transportation.
- Creating a community more resilient to climate exacerbated hazards and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Each open house is a walk-in style with engagement activities and educational posters. Skagit County staff and other experts will be available to answer questions on the Comprehensive Plan update process and how the community can be involved throughout the next year. The open houses will be taking place on the following dates and locations:

- Anacortes Depot and Community Arts Center, 611 R Avenue, Anacortes, WA on Thursday, June 20th from 5:30-7:00 PM
- Sedro-Woolley Community Center, 703 Pacific Street, Sedro-Woolley, WA on Wednesday, June 26th from 5:30-7:00 PM
- Concrete High School, 7630 S Superior Ave, Concrete, WA on Thursday, June 27th at 5:30-7:00 PM

Residents and stakeholders are encouraged to stay informed and participate actively in the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update by visiting [www.skagitcounty.net/2025CPA](http://www.skagitcounty.net/2025CPA) or emailing [pdscomments@co.skagit.wa.us](mailto:pdscomments@co.skagit.wa.us).

Please note, there will be a second series of open houses focused on climate change this upcoming fall.

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## Appendix F. June 2024 Open House Boards and Comments

### Board Activity Question: What does rural character mean to you?



**ACTIVITY: Rural Land Use**

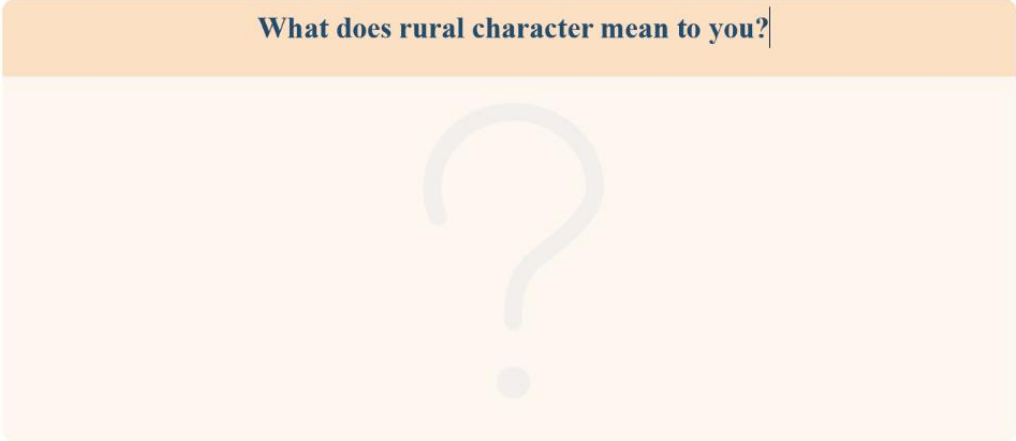
*A view of Skagit Valley farm fields*




In the comprehensive plan, the County is required to create goals and policies that protect rural character RCW 36.70A.070, but what does that mean to the community? See the land use poster for examples of rural land in the County.

**Instructions:** Please grab a sticky note and write down what rural character means to you. Ask a staff member if you have any questions.

**What does rural character mean to you?**





Want habitats for: eagles, ospreys, herons, pelicans, water birds, etc. Harbor seals – beaches to haul out on or safely leave a pup for hours a day.

No FCC.

Protect fish, forests, bird habitats, sustainable farming methods.

Greenbelts, parks, preservation of ag land.

Rural lands are conservation lands, farmlands, forest, wetlands. All should be preserved for their function in reducing GHG as they sequester carbon. Population growth should be restricted urban areas.”

Rural = sparse population and no development.

Protect the farmland. \*Key

No urban sprawl. Preservation of open spaces. Protected habitats for wildlife.

Protect farm, fish, and forests.

Rural character: open spaces, scenic vistas, peace and quiet, native plants, happy animals, no smoke.

Animal habitat, forests, waterways, farmland, open space, acknowledgment of culture that supports and accompanies all these.

No sprawl. Protection of farmland.

If growth = residential housing, then clustered housing with 50-60% open space easements.

Green grass and trees. Walking areas.

Scenic beauty.

Open spaces, fields, forests, farming, elk, free flowing streams and rivers.

Don't take farmland for single-family residential development.

New homes that don't have to look 'modern' i.e., steel boxy boxes.

Have the county commissioners form a natural/conservation lands advisory committee to advise on non-commercial use of natural lands – forests for carbon sequestration, etc.

Rural character: no housing development, no non-agricultural enterprises or businesses. Agricultural activity – growing food, raising cattle, sheep, etc.

Environment – not rural; means intact forests, wetlands, and rivers where our water and air are filtered, animals thrive.

Urban/land use element. How do we catch up to density requirements in cities. Need enforcement or incentive to keep rural areas rural.

Planning inclusive of the “natural” environment that takes into account change in the climate in relation to existing resources and human habitation, use, and preservation.

Farmland, open space, protected areas, decreased density, decreased traffic.

Fewer houses on the landscape

“Rural character” means ag, but a lot more. It means protected habitat for the full variety of wildlife. It means having plenty of places people can walk/hike in natural areas (forests, fields, shorelines).

Close community

Save farmland for farming

Too many farmlands and acres are being converted to wildlife habitat such as elk and salmon.

New climate solutions allowed on all lands, i.e., storing bio char

Employment opportunities

Dar información sobre los pesticidas que utilizan los agricultores para sus siembras para proteger a los animales y personas que viven en esas áreas (Provide information about the pesticides that farmers use on their crops to protect the animals and people that live in those areas).

Let river take its natural course. It will eventually anyway.

Modification of existing zoning to allow for more viable housing solutions.

Caring for each other

Trees, green areas, less traffic, sense of community/connectedness

Open space; untouched conserved land for future generations; farmland preserved.

Zoning needs updated. Need more space for housing.

Parks; farms; protected spaces; animals; clean

A sense of community. Let's get back to that!

Land for wildlife; protection of critical areas.

Lack of pavement; green space; quiet/solitude; forests nearby; farming; wildlife habitat

Critical areas. Not enough. We need broader protection goal for rural.

Open space where people and wildlife are co-existing.

Agricultural use; forests; parks; natural areas; environmentally sensitive areas; open space; nurseries; low-density residential

Protecting the Earth. Less concrete; sustainable development

Respect for the land, people, and all creatures that share this incredible place on the planet. Believe in a shared ecosystem.

Low-density development. More farms, forests, undeveloped areas.

Community-controlled area with few governmental intrusions. Open space, farms, no strip malls

Healthy ecosystems and high-quality water

Open spaces, which means not having the crowds & congestion of the city.

Keep open spaces resource lands – ag, forestry, wetlands. Close wetlands. BANK

Open space; farmers getting to farm without government overreach; parks; trees

Land that is left untouched by communities

Human-inhabited buffer around wild places where wildlife and trees find refuge.

We care for all neighbors, especially those who suffer.

Where all people matter and are treated with respect.

Look at Germany – strict limits of town vs rural. They get it because they had to.

90% new growth in cities

Wetlands; native forests; wild rivers; trails; wildlife; Some comparable commerce (ag, tourism, forestry)

Los químicos de pesticidas de los agricultores (Agricultural pesticide chemicals)

Lots of open space

Ability to be spaced apart from other homes; have room to grow crops, raise animals

Roads that branch out like a tree, or its roots. Not like a grid. But you know? Without some good general and specialty stores nearby, it'll all wither on the vine.

Important to protect existing farmland.

Keep farmlands. No more city enforcement.

Importance of public safety with rural homelessness. Need more resources.

## Board Activity Question: What housing issues are you seeing in Skagit County?



Housing issues may refer to anything related to your living situation. Examples of this may be housing affordability, available rental units, housing in proximity to amenities or jobs, and housing types.

**Instructions:** Please grab a sticky note and write down what rural character means to you. Ask a staff member if you have any questions.

### What housing issues are you seeing in Skagit County?



Consider eliminating or restricting short-term (Airbnb, etc.) rentals so people who live and work here can afford housing.

Lack of affordable housing.

Public transit supporting dense housing.

No mandate on developers to include sufficient affordable housing.

No more mega-mansion enclaves.

Incentives for ADUs in city, where double lots may have high taxes. Tax forgiveness for owners works sometimes.

Need housing close to transit, groceries, and with green space and trees. Focus on low-income (which is middleclass at this point) and high-density. No sprawl. Preserve mature forests and trees.

Not enough senior living apartments.

Housing should be mixed. Let's not squeeze lower income all together and reinforce inequality.

Dense housing – more traffic congestion.

Affordable housing for essential workers while safeguarding rural lands.

Housing plenty! Use or re-use available i.e., Mt. Vernon, Sedro Woolley.

Mandates on developers to provide affordable housing and green space.

Interest in protecting rural natural resource land from expanded housing needs. Cities are better positioned to absorb housing density. Better for climate and transportation.

Regulate ADUs to protect trees, upkeep in neighborhoods. What will ramshackle ADUs look like in a decade?

The requirement to have apartments be tiny sq. ft. We need variety housing for seniors with no stairs, single level. Shouldn't be required to have buildings look 'modern.' Keep it 'local,' wood 'log cabin' rustic, not all steel.

Consolidate housing and new growth to existing towns and UGAs. Stop landscape fragmentations.

In Anacortes: Negative bias towards low-income housing, and towards Habitat for Humanity.

Concentrate residential development in cities – 90° urban residential growth. Discourage housing in flood plains and forests.

County should consider tiny homes attached to full facility homes as a good way to provide housing on rural land that is more affordable.

Lack of affordable and high-density housing.

What policies can ensure affordability?

Affordability especially for work force. Any way to limit the size of homes? Some of the McMansions are simply obscene. Enforce regulations for building/remodels/additions. R/T environmental protections.

Unhoused population needs cold weather protection. Currently none in Anacortes this last winter.

Need trees/green spaces near dense housing. Research shows this decreases crime and supports mental health.

Appreciative of the 1,200 sf ADU allowance. Has been a good size home for me as my family and I recently moved back.

Additional parks should be added along with increased density.

Affordability; complex permit processing; limited units in rural zones.

Don't need more building. Use what we have, i.e., old homes falling apart – build apartments.

Rent is too high for young people starting out.

The waitlist is long for those with low income.

Rent rising

No affordable rentals or new housing with "green" features

Rent too high – more than necessary for expenses

Need more apartments/duplexes, ADUs in cities.

Many apartment complexes seem to be perpetual poverty traps. Need to find a way to increase density while maintaining ownership. Townhouses? Or at least better-quality apartments with gyms, pools, etc.

Mas programas de Vivienda asequible (More affordable housing programs)

No housing available

Require all multi-family apartments to include 20% of units permanently affordable to people with poverty level incomes.

Not enough housing. Not dense enough housing within UGAs. More ADUs and creative denser housing solutions.

Seniors are losing their households due to increases in costs. Unhoused seniors.

New housing impeding on forest/vulnerable areas. Prefer focusing on infill/density and preserving natural resources.

Two friends, both employed, can't find affordable rentals. One aged 52, one aged 67.

Buscar soluciones para mejorar el costo de Vivienda por que todo está muy caro y dejar de construir casas muy grandes en áreas naturales (Look for more solutions to improve the cost of housing because everything is very expensive and stop building very large houses in natural areas).

Need more diverse options for all! More affordable, more eviction prevention. Housing for essential workers – teachers & healthcare for example

Senior housing, handicapped accessible

No small rural acreage available for hobby farms, etc.

Affordable housing; lower rents; adequate public services; open space parks; community service; available parking; adequate walking/bike lanes.

No affordable rental for my kids! Skagit County should not be as expensive as Snohomish County.

Less government interference and easier permitting would allow more building.

Make middle- and lower-income neighborhoods livable. Parks, trees, trails.

Too many apartments. How will the schools and medical facilities handle the increase of populations. Who will fill all these new apartments?

Low income/affordable housing is not affordable.

Revisit card open space options. Need more employment opportunities.

20-minute neighborhoods anywhere there is clustered housing. "Villages" – especially in cities and towns.

Ignoring issues does not solve problems. What is being done?

Type of houses are limited.

I like the ideas of ADUs and infilling in cities. Provides affordable housing opportunities without extreme concentration.

More flexible zoning. Local ordinances to create diverse options. Think outside the box.

Antiquated Section 8 voucher process.

Employment opportunities do not cover housing costs. Need better paying jobs.

Limited low-income housing. High rent and taxes going up.

Not enough housing

Viviendas para familias de bajo recursos programas (Housing programs for low-income families)

Need more middle-income housing

More programs for mid-income, single-parent households



Costs too high with too many barriers

Lacking services in temp housing

We know what isn't working. Need to try new ways.

So many car campers – RVs, shacks, unsanitary housing, housing damaged by floods, needs weatherization and rehab. Rural homelessness.

Mi preocupación personal es a los precios de vivienda en general está muy caro y los dueños de los apartamentos suben muy seguido las renta pero nuestro salario sigue igual (My personal concern is that the cost of living in general is very expensive, the apartment owners raise the rent very often, but our salary remains the same.)

Rents are ridiculously high, supply is for too little, much housing appear to be of low quality. We need to make it easier to build multi-family housing in the towns and cities – higher density. No FCCs, which = sprawl.

Keep strict UGA boundaries. Force housing density.

Long waitlists for low-income. AMI does not match cost of living or housing.

Limited low-income housing options in the foreseeable future.

Lack of long-term low-income housing compared to wages and job opportunities in the area.

Types of housing is very limited

Middle housing

Too many apartments. No additional schools for the added kids.

Zero transitional housing options.

Multi-family housing options with one of a neighborhood model.

Need for more low-income and middle-income housing.

Too much high-density housing going in. Need affordable single-family.

Permit process is costly. Try to make it more efficient.

Places like Martha's Place in Sedro-Woolley

Your chart does not address the rise in cost of housing (rent/own)

Water rights; available parking for apartments and cottage housing

Tiny homes for veterans. Many have HUD vouchers but no place to go.

Different types of housing – transitional, shelters, tiny home villages, cottage housing, apartments with green space, town homes with courtyards

More housing vouchers

The market is just too high. Gotta ramp it down before it crashes. But people can't afford to live in houses, so however it comes down would be nice.

Homes for sale in upper valley are priced beyond what residents can afford and some are not even livable. To remove and build again is cost prohibitive and requires too much red tape.

Create a program that existed in Seattle, through the Seattle Senior Center in the '90s. They matched seniors who were not ready to go into assisted living yet with people who needed a place to live and could provide services in exchange to stay with the senior (they screened both parties).

Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.

Use Anacortes Family Center to consult with on what they are doing. 90% success rate.

Sustainable; green; low-impact; high-plant material

Let's chat! Chuck – WOAWW (4##) 5##-4### [censored]

There is low to no rental vacancy. Housing prices have skyrocketed.

We could use a variety of intentional tiny home villages that address different needs.

**Board Activity Question: What improvements or additions would you like to see in our community's public facilities, such as roads, sidewalks, parks, sewer, water systems, or other government services, to better meet the needs of residents now and in the future?**

**Transportation and Capital Facilities Overview**

The transportation, capital facilities, and utilities topics of a comprehensive plan are interconnected. Capital facilities are dependent on future expansion of transportation networks to adequately assess future costs of facilities required by state law.

**What is a Capital Facility?**

1. Streets, roads, highways, and sidewalks
2. Street and road lighting systems
3. Traffic signals
4. Domestic water systems
5. Storm and sanitary sewer systems
6. Parks and recreation facilities
7. Schools
8. Other Government Services

The transportation, capital facilities, and utilities elements include:

- a. An inventory of all facilities and services, and state-owned transportation facilities.
- b. Active transportation facilities and corridors that address and encourage enhanced community access and promote healthy lifestyles.
- c. A forecast of the future needs for such capital facilities.
- d. The proposed locations and capacities of expanded or new capital facilities.
- e. The three elements must be consistent with the land use element and the land use assumptions to accommodate growth.

**What improvements or additions would you like to see in our community's public facilities, such as roads, sidewalks, parks, sewer, water systems, or other government services, to better meet the needs of residents now and in the future?**

**Instructions:** This is an open ended question. Please grab a sticky note and add your response to the board.

Need parallel but separated motor, bike, and walking routes throughout the county, especially in built-up areas.

Speed limits on trails. Silent e-bikes can create conflict.

Sidewalks needed on 12<sup>th</sup> & Oakes. Dangerous for walking and bikes.

Need more sidewalks.

Efforts to support more bicycle use around towns to decrease use of cars.

Bicycle roads connecting the cities.

How plan for low snowpack and water shortage?

Concurrency for infill.

An effort to increase use of public transportation and decrease dependency on personal cars (housing by transit or near shopping).

Shelters at every bus stop.

Sidewalks where there are none and fix the broken ones so easy to walk, use a wheelchair, etc. All areas should promote walking.

Safer pedestrian (bicycle) routes. Protect water supply especially with drought and sea-level rise. Increase water conservation (improve water monitoring with remote sensors).

Develop a transportation plan that addresses climate impacts, sea-level rise, increased flooding of roads, etc. How will this be addressed?

Map all the areas in the county vulnerable to climate change and sea-level rise, floods, landslides, alluvial fans, wildfire. Then map all the roads in those vulnerable areas and develop a plan for how those roads can be changed so transportation will be possible even when disaster happens.

I-5 traffic. Getting on I-5 in Burlington is sometimes very slow going north and south.

Community spaces that are not shopping.

Walker, biker friendly traffic separation.

Planning for sea-level rise/increased flooding.

Community pool: Olympic size, HS swim meets, lap swimming. Parking for trails: Tommy Thompson, Tribal meeting center. Parking lot on Tommy Thompson Trail near RV park by Fidalgo Bay Rd.

More sidewalks. Skagit Transit to east county past Concrete

More parks. More sidewalks to encourage walking.

Serve Bayview with sanitary sewer

Trails for hikes

Creating flood water storage for drought use. Reservoirs, aquifer recharge, etc.

More kid activities

Need updated fairgrounds with better amenities. Centrally located in county.

Safe biking lanes and walking for urban and rural commuters.

Need more schools in McGarigle

Consider green infrastructure to mitigate flood TSLR & clean water. Important as utilities.

More stops in Skagit Transit routes (Sedro-Woolley)

Long-term camping areas

Greatly increase the acreage in the county parks system. Skagit has 2,200 acres; Whatcom has 16,000 acres; Snohomish has over 10,000 acres. Parks & park acreage should also grow with population.

Water system that does not require chloramines.

Better ways to prevent backflow (enhanced air gaps?). More alternative transportation. Transport alternatives in face of disaster (bridge down).

Mas clinicas de atencion sobre salud mental y fisico (More mental and physical health care clinics)

Paved bike/hiking trails between Mt. Vernon, Burlington, Sedro-Woolley. Paved!

More crosswalks clearly marked with lights in school zones. Sedro-Woolley High School, Central Elementary

Mas oficinas de welfer (More welfare assistance offices)

Need to centralize emergency services

What's the plan & cost to increase infrastructure like sewage treatment for all the new houses?

Ayudar más a las escuelas para que tengan más recursos para formar mejores ciudadanos (help schools get more resources to form better citizens)

Many people now have ebikes. They can be a realistic means of commuting to work locally. We need a more comprehensive system of bike lanes and paved bike trails to encourage this form of "green" commuting.

Se necesita mas escuelas porque hay mucha sobre poblucion en los edificios escolares (more schools are needed because there is a lot of overcrowding in existing school buildings)

Some of the income from the lottery and sale of cannabis should be used for roads & schools. We could use more bike lanes as we improve our roads!

Necesitamos mas escuelas para todos los grados (We need more schools for all grades)

More parks (natural areas – not soccer fields) near dense neighborhoods

More trails and multi-use paths. Rail-to-trail projects!

More bike trails; more hike trails; more walk trails; more waterfront parks!!!!

Protect our water intake sources via conservation

Increase transit & trail connections to parks (county, state, and other areas for public access)

Government managed/sponsored shelter/housing facilities

Improve public transit to reduce auto dependance. Improve regionally significant biking trails & infrastructure to encourage use.

Electric taxis. Low cost & subsidized running known routes.

Centralized facilities for social services. Easier access to broad scope of service.

All new apartments. Need charging stations.

Plan to move roads inland. Managed retreat.

We need charging stations upriver.

In the 1920s when Clear Lake was a happening place, there were 3 types of public transportation there, 20x a day. Improved public transit helps economic growth & opportunity.

Allow for/encourage composting toilets to reduce water use and positive sewage use. Encourage grey water use/water capture.

More redundancy for Hwy 20. Landslides in a few key places can strand a lot of people by making roads impassable.

Build an elk crossing bridge over Hwy 20.

Bus service is needed in Marble Mount, even though not many people upriver, service is still needed.

Recycling pick-up

Slow traffic on Hwy 20 through Concrete. More sidewalks, better roads, and use of materials to repave in county.

More public transportation past Concrete

Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.

Please provide recycling pick-up. I do not have garbage pick-up because I have to bring recycle items to transfer station. I would pay for garbage pick-up if recycle pick-up were also provided.

See the Concrete Herald issues, May & June. Letters from Mike Brondi about budget shortfalls.

Do NOT build elk bridge over Hwy 20. It will not work! No way to funnel them to that location. Huge waste of money!!

Thank you for the East County Resource Center.

Please repair rails to trails, washout near Concrete.

## Board Activity Question: What should we do about climate change in Skagit County?

### Climate Element Overview

A view of South Fidalgo Island

The new Climate element and sub-elements of the comprehensive plan will be discussed in greater detail at the end of the summer and into fall 2024. We encourage you to sign up for online to receive updates on the project. Go to <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> or use the QR code on the introduction poster.

#### New Climate Element (HB 1181)

House Bill (HB) 1181 updates the Washington Growth Management Act (GMA) and requires cities and counties to integrate climate action and resilience policies into their comprehensive plan updates. These policies will reduce cities' and counties' contributions to climate change, improve preparedness for climate-related impacts and emergencies, maximize other benefits to communities (such as improvements to air quality and health), and integrate with other planning documents such as housing, transportation, and land use.

#### Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction

Climate change is caused by the greenhouse gas effect, in which greenhouse gases, or GHGs, trap heat from the sun. They are called greenhouse gases because they act similarly to the roof of a greenhouse – they trap heat as if they are a roof and increase the temperature of the planet. GHGs from human activities have been collecting in the atmosphere since the 1800s and are warming the climate more each year. Globally, average temperatures have risen by about 2 degrees Fahrenheit since the 1880s.

GHG emissions mainly come from burning fossil fuels like natural gas and gasoline to power our buildings and vehicles. Based on estimates of how many GHG emissions are coming from different sectors in the county (such as buildings, transportation, and waste), the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Sub-Element will aim to reduce Skagit County's contributions to climate change.

**Its policies will:**

1. Reduce overall GHG emissions within cities and towns
2. Reduce per-person driving miles
3. Prioritize actions that benefit overburdened communities

### What should we do about climate change in Skagit County?



**Instructions:** This is an open ended question. Please grab a sticky note and add your response to the board.



Get the Shoreline Master Plan included in the new GMA Plan.

Talk much more openly about the current and predicted impacts of climate change and lead efforts to help community members build resiliency to change and respond.

Refineries – but not oil. Other products?

Address sea level rise in Shoreline Management Plan now.

We build more housing for seniors, so they move out of their 4-bedroom house. No new housing needed.

Overreach in demands concerns me. I don't believe we affect nature/climate like the government wants us to believe.

Say NO to Initiative 2117.

Do not promote false dichotomy of economy vs environment. Not planning for and trying to minimize climate change is our most costly (and futile) choice.

Create Conservation Advisory Committee to advocate for environment and natural resources and climate resilience.

Use Skagit Climate Consortium – great resource right here! Emphasize less consumerism, being more thoughtful about it.

Consult with Skagit Climate Science Consortium which has local expertise and data.

When will you know the damage from electricity?!

Move as quickly as possible to move to non-fossil fuel energy sources, thoughtfully planning a transition to mitigate harm.

Increase tax on gasoline

Plant more native trees, shrubs, & wildflowers. Stop mowing lawns with gas mowers. Ban leaf blowers.

Electric public vehicles

Talleres educativos sobre cambio climático (Educational workshops on climate change)

Review zoning, allowing commercial composting. Need more.

Go electric. Offer incentives to remove lawns, install solar.

Reforestar mas, limpiar los lagos, ríos y áreas públicos. Poner información para educar a la gente sobre el medio ambiente (More Reforesting, clean lakes, rivers, and public areas by providing information to educate people about the environment)

Create a Climate Citizen's Advisory Committee and educate the community

Housing for middle income folks. More public transit.

Grow trees

Who is on the "Climate Policy Advisory Team"?? Get the Skagit Climate Science Consortium involved now.

Require heat and cold amelioration in urban areas. Shade trees along streets and around housing. Good design with insulation. Solar power!

Expand renewable energy of hydroelectric power

Protect healthy forests. Implement conservation easements to maintain forest lands.

Paneles solares para apartamentos (Solar panels for apartments)

Protect our water quality, stop runoff pollution flowing into Skagit River and streams

Plan for sea level rise! Include language in Shoreline program to require hearing examiner and public review. Listen to scientists, including when planning riparian buffers. Use 2100 projections of sea level rise to adapt buildings/structures. Protect aquatic vegetation.

Lo que aria o ya lo estay haciendo mis hijos y yo es tomar baños más cortos para ahorrar agua y cuidar q' las luses de casa no se usen están apagadas (What my children and I would do or already to is take shorter baths to save water and make sure the house lights are not turned on.)

Get rid of hard armoring

Stop clearcut without replanting!

Require solar on all new builds. Otherwise, where will all new needed electricity generate from?

Go electric. No fossil fuels (methane gas or oil).

Make sure urban areas are good places to live to encourage density. Plan for livable communities; walkable. Improve public transit and thoughtful regional biking trails.

Increase availability of public transportation. Increase and improve the network of bike trails. Encourage development in UGAs in the form of walkable neighborhoods – stores, services, all within ready walking distance of housing.

Electrify county buildings and transportation.

Community solar. Make it easy!

Safe and connected bike lanes/paths to encourage alternatives to cars!

Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.

Plant trees. Stop indiscriminate cutting. Replant conifers.

Listen to the scientists

The county should be protecting the sole source aquifer and managing new wells on Guemes Island. It is not acceptable the 40 residences have lost their wells to seawater intrusion.

Consult the Tribes! They know how to steward our land and water.

Support community solar projects; promote tiny home community living – small footprints; support our local organic farmers; let's talk compost!

Encourage towns to be more reliant on solar power

Encourage the tribes to participate and bring their solutions to the table. Make them essential stakeholders if they are willing.

Electric vehicle charging stations

### Board Activity Question: What actions do you think Skagit County government should prioritize to enhance its preparedness and resiliency to changing climate?

**Resiliency Sub Element Overview**  
A view of Skagit Valley farm fields

**What actions do you think Skagit County government should prioritize to enhance its preparedness and resiliency to changing climate?**

**Instructions:** This is an open ended question. Please grab a sticky note and add your response to the board.

The new resiliency sub-element focuses goals and policies on improving climate preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. Continue reading to learn more or ask a staff member.

**Climate Resiliency**

Skagit County is already experiencing impacts from climate change, such as rising temperatures, increasing smoky days and risk of wildfire, and more intense storms and flooding. These impacts have negative effects on community health and infrastructure. For example, hot days can worsen heart and lung conditions, especially for communities like elderly people, children, and people who work outdoors. The Climate Resiliency Sub-Element will measure community vulnerability to different climate impacts, then set forward policies to improve the ability of Skagit County's communities and infrastructure to withstand and adapt to climate-related impacts.

**Challenges we will likely face from climate change:**

- **Extreme heat:** Warmer temperatures, especially during the summer, where hot days will feel even hotter.
- **Wildfire risk:** Drier conditions and water supply shortages will increase future wildfire risk and associated health impacts.
- **More frequent flooding:** More intense winter storms will make wet days even wetter, increasing risks of extreme flooding and landslides.
- **Threats to water supply and security:** Loss snowpack will limit water supply and security, harming residents and local habitats.

**View of South Fidalgo Island**

Shoreline management without use of armory which only causes increased erosion in adjacent areas.

No further development in the Skagit flood plain.

A solid Shoreline Master Plan based on science and goal of protection.

Consult with Skagit Climate Science Consortium for solid scientific local data on the impacts of climate change in Skagit County. Base County decisions on their data.

Set back dikes, restore lost wetlands, plant more trees, stop fragmentation of landscape.

Disaster preparedness (bridges functional).



Ban greenhouse gas in all ways possible as quickly as possible. This should be core to all of the planning.

Responsiveness to impact on lower income. Awareness of inequities.

More trees, more enforcement of setbacks. Where is the SMP – started in 2010, it is needed, based on science! Enforce/limit armoring to regs soft/not hard.

Earthquakes of 9+ stemming from subduction zone off the Pacific Coast is more of a threat than cyclical changes in climate.

Forest management, climate, encroachment from development, manage fire.

Reductions in greenhouse gas emissions; increase in electrification.

Support Climate Commitment Act.

Water quality and runoff

Green = salination of soils

Avoid development on landslide prone slopes

Solar is not cost effective (I have solar). Allow small scale nuclear plant. Don't close off use of natural gas. We need bridge fuel.

Avoid development in areas forecast for flooding & sea level rise

Update the Shoreline Master Plan to take into account sea level rise by 2028

Wildfire preparedness and risk reduction

Emphasis of green infrastructure such as healthy streams, open space, & healthy forests to buffer the impacts of climate change, especially heat.

Program of buy outs and TDR programs for identified areas prone to climate impacts

Write a Climate Action Framework. Comp Plan will not be detailed enough to make targeted change.

Map hazard areas and be strict about compliance. Currently people still getting permits in hazard areas.

Education: communities, schools, county/city, priority education regarding climate change. Everyone/every neighborhood required to learn about and be prepared for wildfire evacuation and for neighborhood and home preparedness.

Green dots natural hazard such as landslide risk with increased winter rains.

Use only green energy. Allow solar & wind & geothermal

First, create a map (with public input) of all areas at risk from sea level rise. Then, prepare a prioritized list of actions to take (e.g., moving roads, incentivizing shoreline residents to move inland, etc.)

God controls the climate. This is an agenda I don't participate in.

Taller educativo sobre cambio climático (educational workshop over climate change)

Completely update the county's open space concept plan to take into account climate & flooding, sea level rise

Reforzar presas y bordes de ríos para tener mejor protección para las familias que viven cerca de esos áreas (reinforce dams and river edges to have greater protection for families who live near these areas)

Backflow in sewer & water contamination

Leaders must act to reduce warming. Reduce use of fossil fuels.

Implementar talleres sobre conservación de la naturaleza (implement workshops about nature conservation)

Stop allowing development in areas that will not be resilient. High costs long term.

Incentivize people moving out of high-risk areas

Identify opportunities to work with changing natural landscapes instead of against them. Use best available science to guide decision making.

Plan for extreme weather. Emergency shelters for heat dome and freezing temps.

Better land management; better research into effects of land changes in our most rural areas; better public transportation for the same areas; more restorative farms.

Avoid steep slopes and erosion hazard areas. Control tree cutting and removal.

Offer incentives to homeowners to remove turf lawn and plant native plants & trees.

Focus 90% of new growth in cities

Elevate land conservation besides agriculture and working forests in the comp plan

Aser más talleres con información de cómo Podemos evitar el desperdicio de agua (do more workshops with information on how we can avoid wasting water)

Form an Environmental & Sustainability Committee. Nothing like this exists yet.

Climate has been changing forever. Just like the weather, you have to live with it.

Leadership must act for the county and inform the public about how others can act.

Leadership must educate and inform the public about why climate policy is necessary.

Help the county to transition move to renewable electricity

Avoid urban development in flood plains and flood maps. Habitat protections.

Have a conservation subdivision mechanism so people can keep home or move it but sell and to government or conservation orgs.

County leadership must lead on effective climate policy.

Revise regulations to prohibit additional development in areas vulnerable to sea level rise (and tsunamis). Actively plan and promote planting of trees in towns & cities for shade and cooling and in rural areas for carbon sequestration.

Climate protection is a pay now or pay much more later issue.

If you think paying to protect climate now, wait till we have to pay later.

Set policy to reduce fossil fuels. Set aside/protect areas of most risk of flooding. Don't let people build in flood plain/alluvial fans.

Preserve green areas, forest land. Plant native plants. Plant more trees.

Consider habitat restoration as a response to mitigate shoreline SLR.

Leadership must act to mitigate consequences of warming. All consequences.

Do not allow hard armoring on shorelines.

Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.

Extreme heat and extreme cold. Last winter our temps dropped to -1° F. The previous record was 9° F

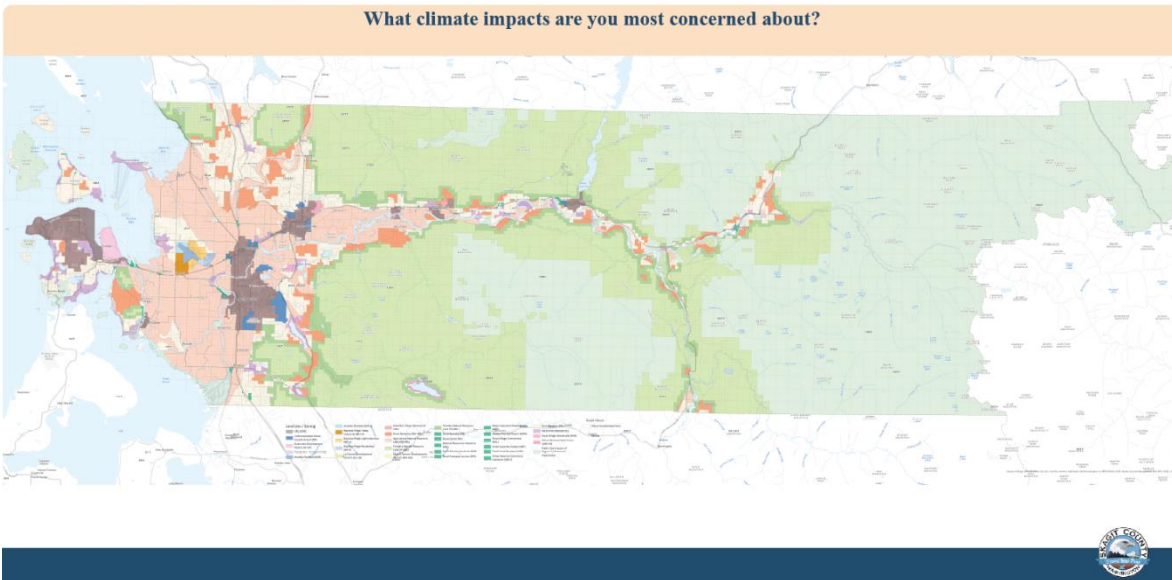
Consulting with the local tribes on solutions to climate change.

## Board Activity Question: What climate impacts are you most concerned about?



**Instructions:** Using the provided map, mark your experiences with different climate impacts using colored dots:

- Red dot: for areas where you have experienced extreme heat.
- Yellow dot: for areas where you have experienced wildfire or wildfire smoke.
- Blue dot: for areas where you have experienced flooding impacts.
- Green dot: for areas where you have experienced other climate impacts.



Increases in cost of living due to increasing need to mitigate climate effects.

Loss of quality of life. Increase in wildfire/smoke, heat, drought.

I'm most concerned about the impacts of rising heat and landscape degradation due to development and drought driving degradation of the ecosystem to the point it cannot recover.

Increases in erosion of shoreline and landslides.

Shoreline management challenges.

In Skagit specifically – sea level rise, saltwater intrusion into wells, drought, heat, wildfire, impact on pollinators.+

Warming the water.

As climate changes and things get harder, fear will increase. Can we prepare community resilience and fight tendency to “hunker down” with guns?

Use common sense in requirements; many changes we see are just part of nature and always changing.

Water supply in summer, reduced snowpack melt, in-stream flows

Local wildfire hazard

Fire and drowned wetlands

Losing trees and vegetation

Wildfires ruining every last summer of my life

Harm to agriculture

Displaced wildlife and loss of birds due to fires and extreme heat

Flooding

Loss of trees!!

Paying later will be much more expensive than paying now if we don't act now.

Wildfire

GHG, emissions, pollution, air quality

Loss of trees, landslides, wildfires

Water too much at times and too little (drought) at times

Estamos teniendo gran impacto de calor y creo q la contaminación la a disminuido y estas cosas creo que nos causan mas enfermedades (We are having a great heat impact and I think that pollution has increased I think cause more diseases)

Health consequences of heat/smoke

Air quality

Risk of forest fire

Sea level rise; drier vegetation leads to fire; drought; pressure on wildlife & habitat; growing food

Reciclar el plástico, el carton, el vidrio, la ropa usada (Recycle plastic, cardboard, glass, used clothes)

No more coal or oil trains, air pollution, fire, & explosives, please

Higher food costs due to crop damage, less water

Sea level rise – response and prevention

Sea level rise, saltwater intrusion, melting glaciers, drought, wildfires, loss of farmland, loss of tidal marshlands, flooding, death of species

Para la deforestación y el uso inadecuado de productos nocivos para el medio ambiente (For deforestation and inappropriate use of harmful products for the environment)

Flooding

Floods

Tree canopy

SLR & flooding will drastically impact large areas of the county. Forests are already stressed – will need thoughtful, ecologically minded management.

La contaminación por gas de efecto invernadero (Pollution due to the greenhouse gas effects)

Loss of biodiversity in this incredible place

Heat dome, wildfire smoke, loss of trees, drought,

Heat, flooding, & wildfires

Wildfire, drought

Extreme cold & winter weather in east county & no shelter/poor housing for many

Sembrar mas arboles (Plant more trees)

Proteccion de los animals (Animal protection)

Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.

Changes in plant & animal phenologies, e.g., leading to lack of traditional food sources during bird migration and breeding, and reproductive failure

Sea level rise, saltwater intrusion onto farmland. Protecting farmland and farm workers.

We should keep our dams!

Heat, wildfire/smoke, reduced snowpack/drought

Salmon – they need cooler waters. Plant shade trees to help.

Plastic pollution; “forever” chemicals. Biodegradable packaging/products would be nice to encourage.

Flooding & land slides blocking access to roads/communities in Cape Horn/Cedar Grove.

Concerned about electric cars and disposal of used batteries; pollution caused by getting component parts, etc.

Rubber preservative on vehicle tires. As tires wear, this chemical goes into the streams (from rainwater). It confuses the salmon’s directionality, and they can’t figure out which way to go!

### **Board Activity Question: Other questions/comments**

Concerned about farm conversion to residential use.

No resource extraction near sensitive areas.

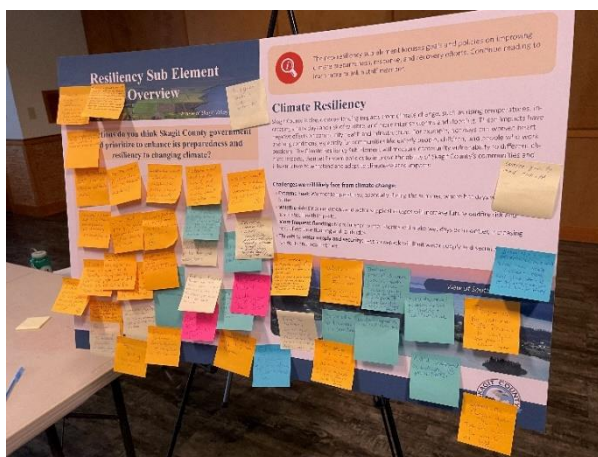
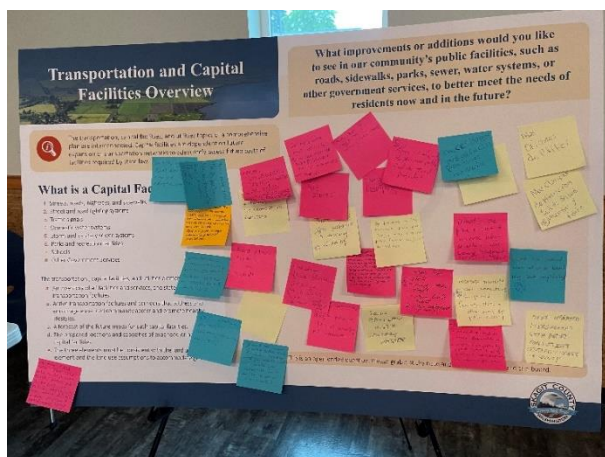
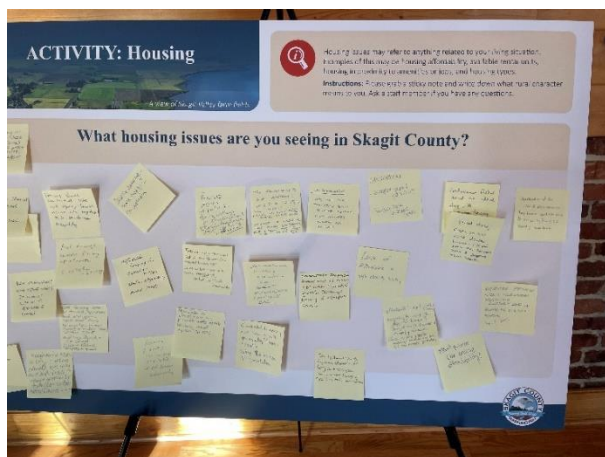
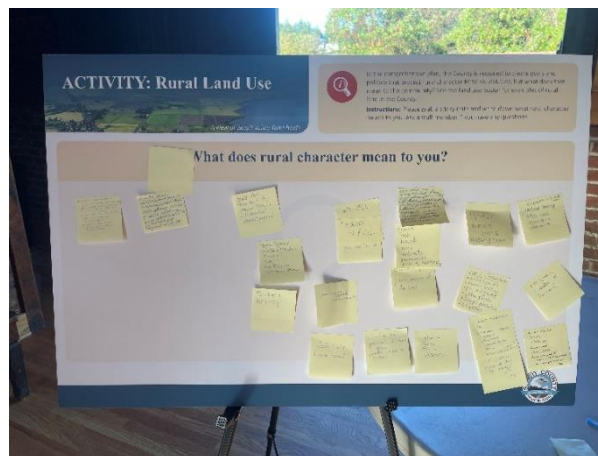
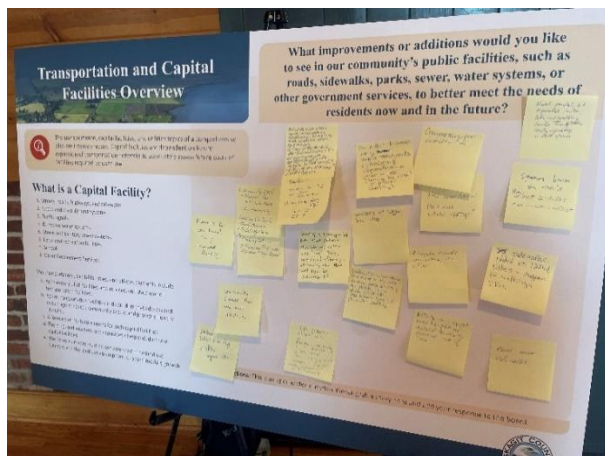
Are there going to be changes to critical area maps – ensure availability.

Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.

## **Appendix G: June 2024 Open House Map Activity Sticker Response**

Large format map on next page.

## Appendix H: June 2024 Open House Photo Gallery





Please visit the project website at <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> for more information.

## **Appendix I: June 2024 Open House Demographic Responses (Anonymous)**

Scanned demographic surveys start on next page.