



# SKAGIT COUNTY 2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

October Planning Commission to Discuss Preliminary Draft Policies







# Agenda

- Project overview
  - Project schedule overview and update
  - Policy revision approach introduction
- Preliminary draft policy amendments for the Climate Element with Resiliency and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Sub-elements.
- Preliminary draft policy amendments for the Environment Element
- Questions and early feedback from the Planning Commission

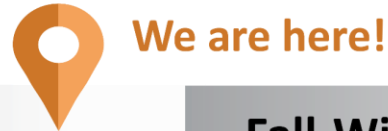
# Project Overview





# Project and Schedule Overview

- Project is nearing completion of data collection and analysis and moving on to policy drafting.



*Skagit County Comprehensive Plan Process*

**Visioning Survey Released**

**Attend a Planning Commission and Provide Public Comment**

**Review Changes**

**Provide Comment**

**Attend a Public Hearing**

*Engagement Opportunities*

*Updated: October 1st, 2024*



# Preliminary Policy Drafting Schedule

- Visit <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> to learn about how to provide public comment.
- Email [pdscomments@co.skagit.wa.us](mailto:pdscomments@co.skagit.wa.us) with the proposal name “Skagit County’s Comprehensive Plan Draft Policies” in the subject line. Include your comments in the body of your email.

Topic	Planning Commission – Preliminary Review	Comment Period	Planning Commission Second Review
Rural (Complete) Natural Resource Lands (Complete)	July 23, 2024	7/23/2024 to 08/22/2024 4:30 p.m.	Early 2025
Land Use (Complete) Housing (Complete) Economic Development (Complete)	August 13, 2024	8/13/2024 to 09/12/2024 4:30 p.m.	Early 2025
Transportation Capital Facilities, and Utilities	September 24, 2024	9/24/2024 to 10/24/2024 4:30 p.m.	Early 2025
<b>Climate &amp; Resiliency Environment</b>	<b>October 22, 2024</b>	<b>10/22/2024 to 11/14/2024 4:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Early 2025</b>





# Community Engagement overview





# Community Engagement Summary

- Visit <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> to download the public participation program and community engagement reports.

Engagement	Completed On	Summary
First Community Survey	May 14, 2024	The first survey collected over strengths, weaknesses, and future focus areas for the County. Download the report online.
Pop-Ups	Ongoing	County staff participated in multiple community events to advertise the first survey, educate the public on the comprehensive plan process. Download the report online.
Stakeholder Interviews	July 10, 2024	The County hosted eight stakeholder interviews with groups focusing on agriculture, environment, housing, and economic development. Download the report online.
Open Houses	June 27, 2024	Open houses were completed at the end of June to educate the public and collect early feedback on specific topics. Download the report online.
Public Comment Periods	In Process	30-Day public comment periods will be included with every draft release of policies.
Climate Open House	October 1, 2024	The open house was held on October 1, 2024, at Jefferson Elementary. The report summarizing results from the open house will be released in November.
Climate Stakeholder Interviews	October 14, 2024	The project team hosted five stakeholder interviews with groups focusing on conservation, environmental issues, and climate justice.
Climate Survey	In Process	Climate survey is open available online for those who were unable to attend the climate open house.



# Summary of Climate-Focused Engagement

## Overview:

- **5 interviews** with community- & climate-focused organizations
- **35 attendees** at in-person open house
- **Ongoing community survey**

## Initial themes:

- Support for Climate Element
- Interest in climate hazard mapping
- Recommendations to: conserve forest land, protect floodplains, support farmworkers, expand transportation options; promote native plants, and educate communities



# Proposed Policy Revisions





# Approach

- Goal and policy changes which reflect the community voice.
- Consistency with the Growth Management Act (GMA) and state law changes since last Comprehensive Plan update
- Consistency with Regional Transportation Plan administered by Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG)
- Consistency with Countywide Planning Policies
- Streamlining of policy language
- Use of active verbs to enhance readability and engagement
- Focus on creating “action” policies to provide direction and implementation for the future





# Climate Element Resiliency and GHG Sub-elements Preliminary Draft Policy Amendments



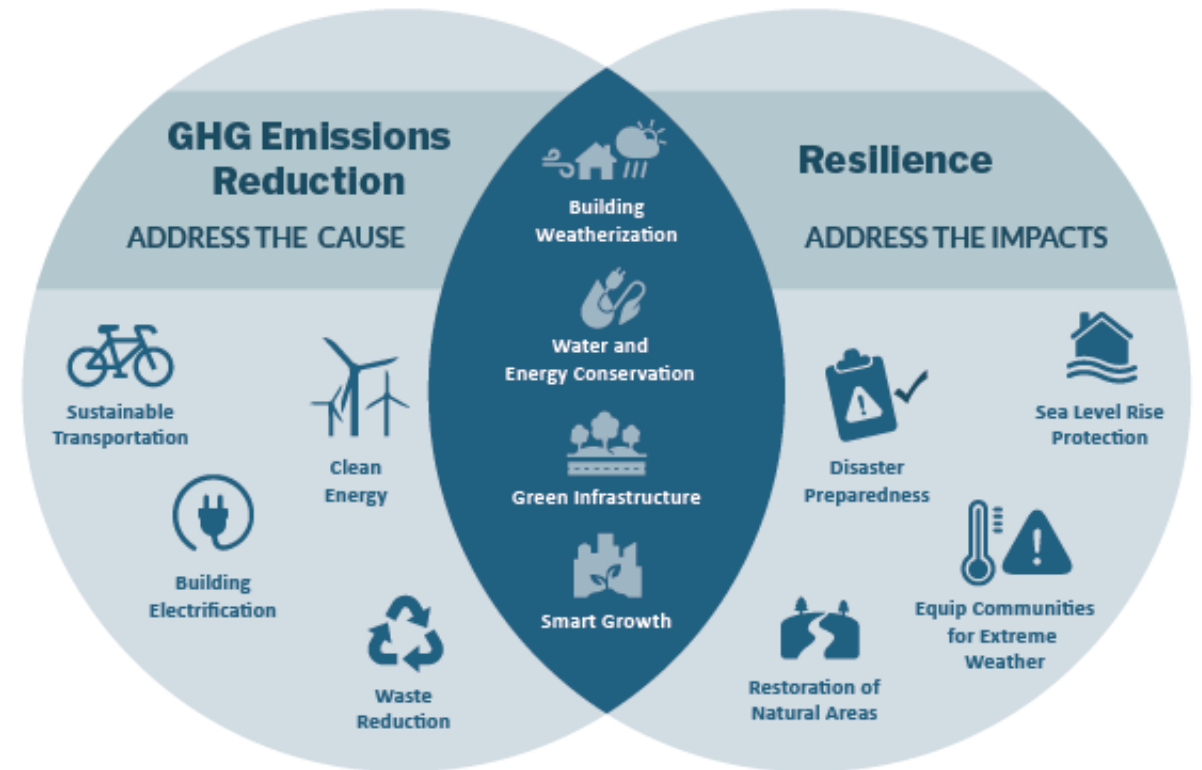




# Climate Element Legislative Context & Background

Amended in 2023 by House Bill 1181, the GMA now requires integrating **climate change policies into comprehensive plan updates**.

To address the new requirements, the Washington State Department of Commerce (“Commerce”) recommends jurisdictions develop a climate element that includes both **resilience** and **GHG emissions reduction** goals and policies.





# Resiliency Policies Approach

## Objective:

In line with state requirements, resilience goals and policies will:

- Address natural hazards created or aggravated by climate change
- Identify, protect, and enhance natural areas to foster climate resilience
- Identify, protect, and enhance community resilience to climate impacts, consistent with environmental justice

## Approach to Policy Development:

- Build off Skagit County climate-related documents:
  - Comprehensive Plan
  - Shoreline Master Program
  - Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan
  - Climate Action Plan
- Align to Commerce Climate Planning Guidance and Menu of Measures
- Address greatest climate risks identified in the county climate impacts summary and the vulnerability assessment
- Incorporate input from the community

# Resiliency Policies

## Key policy focus areas:

- Enhance community preparedness and emergency response to climate hazards.
- Integrate climate projections into land use and development planning.
- Strengthen flood, sea level rise, extreme heat, and drought resilience.
- Improve energy and transportation infrastructure reliability against climate risks.
- Ensure long-term water security through resource management and conservation.

## Key Recommendations

### Policy Levers:

- Partnerships & collaboration
  - WSU Skagit County Extension Program, Conservation District, Drainage District, Public Works, Emergency Management
  - Regulatory agencies, landowners, building developers
  - Energy and water providers
- Implementation of current plans (e.g., Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan)
- Federal, state, and private funding and grant programs
- Siting, design, and development of buildings
- County-owned infrastructure improvements
- Integrated natural resource management planning







# GHG Reduction Policies Approach

## Objective:

GHG emission reduction goals and policies align with the Washington State target of net-zero emissions by 2050 and the following state requirements:

- Reduce overall GHG emissions generated by transportation and land use in cities and towns
- Reduce per-person driving miles
- Prioritize actions that benefit overburdened communities

## Approach to Policy Development:

- Build off Skagit County climate-related documents:
  - Comprehensive Plan
  - Shoreline Master Program
  - Solid Waste Management Plan
  - Climate Action Plan
- Align to Commerce Climate Planning Guidance and Menu of Measures
- Address emission sources from the 2022 GHG emissions inventory
- Incorporate input from the community

# GHG Reduction Policies

## Key policy focus areas:

- Encourage and incentivize energy-efficient technologies in buildings.
- Enhance waste reuse, recycling, and reduction efforts.
- Reduce per-person driving miles and transition to electric vehicles (EV).
- Protect and sustainably manage natural lands (agriculture, forests, grasslands, wetlands).
- Expand support for renewable and low-carbon energy projects and work to phase out non-renewable energy generation.

## Key Recommendations

### Policy levers:

- Partnerships & collaboration
  - Skagit Transit, Public Works, WSU Extension
  - High carbon-emitting sectors
  - Energy providers
- Implementation of current plans (e.g., Solid Waste Management Plan)
- Federal, state, and private funding and grant programs
- Green building development regulations and programs (e.g., C-PACER)
- Incentive programs (e.g., Commute Trip Reduction)
- Alignment with other programs (e.g., Conservation Futures and Open Space Program strategies)



# Environmental Justice Policies

*Addresses both resilience and GHG reduction guidelines.*

## Key Policy Focus Areas:

- Integrate environmental justice and social equity into resilience and GHG reduction policies.
- Prioritize GHG reductions and resilience strategies that benefit overburdened communities.
- Ensure equitable access to green jobs.

## Key Recommendations

### Policy Levers:

- Identification of frontline communities disproportionately impacted by climate change
- Resources and programs designed for vulnerable communities
- Federal, state, and private funding and grant programs
- Collaboration with Tribal governments and local leaders on climate policies
- Culturally sensitive education & outreach
- Development of community resources (e.g., resilience hubs)







## Proposed Policies – Details

- A new proposed chapter, the **Climate Element**, has been introduced into the comprehensive plan to encompass resiliency and GHG reduction policies across ten sectors, including:
  - Agriculture & Food Systems
  - Buildings & Energy
  - Community Health & Well-being
  - Cultural Resources and Practices
  - Economic Development
  - Land Use & Ecosystems
  - Transportation
  - Waste Management
  - Water Resources
  - Zoning & Development



## Amended Policies – Details

- We also integrated GHG emissions reduction and resiliency policies into the existing Comprehensive Plan:
  - **Protection of Rural Character:** Modified overarching goal to include protection for long-term resilience.
  - **Natural Resource Lands:** Modified agricultural drainage policy to incorporate climate resilience considerations. Modified wildfire planning program to focus on resilience.
  - **Environment:** Modified saltwater intrusion policy to account for sea level rise.
  - **Transportation:** Modified policies to include equity considerations and emphasize VMT and GHG reduction.
  - **Energy Conservation:** Modified goals and policies to emphasize reduction of GHG emissions and align to Commerce Guidance.
  - **Solid Waste Management:** Added policy on composting.



# Environment Element Preliminary Draft Policy Amendments



# Environmental

- Added details to support implementation of policies. Example: goal 5A-2.
- Remove redundancies the Comprehensive Plan and Critical Areas Ordinance.
- Revise to improve clarity of policies.

## Key Recommendations

- Revise policies to improve integration between new climate and resiliency policies.
- Align policies with best available science (BAS).





# Questions & Discussion

