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CLIMATE ELEMENT PLANNING GUIDANCE

Thinking Globally, Planning Locally

Washington state publishes guidance to address climate change in local comprehensive plans

The Washington Department of Commerce published climate planning guidance in January 2024 to help local governments develop a comprehensive plan climate element, as required by a new law (HB 1181). A city or county may integrate its climate element's resilience and mitigation goals and policies into a single chapter or integrate the measures into several chapters/elements such as transportation, housing, and land use.

The guidance and other resources are available on Commerce's climate planning website [see QR code, right].

The climate element includes two sub-elements, per the new law:

- A climate resilience sub-element (preparedness, response, recovery) is mandatory for all jurisdictions planning fully under the Growth Management Act. A hazard mitigation plan in substantial conformance with the guidance could be adopted, by reference, to satisfy the resilience sub-element requirements.
- A GHG emissions reduction sub-element (mitigation) is mandatory for the state's largest and fastest-growing counties and their cities and requires measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled [See reference table, pg. 2].

Cities and counties with a 2025 comprehensive plan periodic update deadline will be the first jurisdictions required to include a climate element and should use the guidance to create it. Cities and counties may use Commerce planning grants to develop and implement their plans. See Commerce's website for more details.

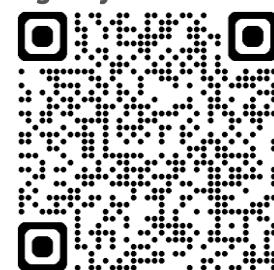
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This program is supported with funding from Washington's Climate Commitment Act. The CCA supports Washington's climate action efforts by putting cap-and-invest dollars to work reducing climate pollution, creating jobs, and improving public health. Information about the CCA is available at www.climate.wa.gov.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT
GROWTH MANAGEMENT
SERVICES

Reference Table: Who Must Create a Comprehensive Plan Climate Element

All fully planning cities and counties must adopt a climate change element. For 11 of the state's largest and fastest-growing counties [see *table below*] and their cities with a population greater than 6,000, as of April 1, 2021,¹ the full scope of new requirements includes adoption of a climate element with both a GHG emissions reduction sub-element and a resilience sub-element.

For fully planning jurisdictions not listed below, only the resilience sub-element is mandatory. However, depending on their population and location, they may also have to update other mandatory comprehensive plan elements, such as transportation and land use.² Refer to Commerce's [grant guidance](#) for applicability.

Counties (and cities within) required to develop a resilience sub-element and a GHG emissions reduction sub-element	2025	2026	2029* Progress Report	
○ Benton		X		
○ Clark	X			
○ Franklin		X		
○ King			X	
○ Kitsap			X	
○ Pierce			X	
○ Skagit	X			
○ Snohomish			X	
○ Spokane		X		
○ Thurston	X			
○ Whatcom	X			

***Note:** The jurisdictions with the first implementation progress reports due in 2029 are only required to update two elements – the transportation element and add a climate element (greenhouse gas emissions reductions sub-element and a resilience sub-element).

Climate Policy Explorer

Use the new Climate Policy Explorer tool to search more than 200 model climate goals and policies (measures) and planning resources. Local jurisdictions are encouraged to use the tool to identify climate measures that may be appropriate for implementation as part the climate element of their periodic update.



SCAN for
Climate Policy Explorer

¹ [2021](#) population is reported by the Office of Financial Management

² [RCW 36.70A.095](#)