

State Legislation



Legislation passed in recent years at the state level impacts the Bellingham Plan. See June 5th City Council presentation for details.

HB 1220 (2021) - “Housing for All”

This bill changed the way housing planning happens across WA, especially:

- » Redefining housing projections by income band and emergency housing types such as shelters
- » Requiring jurisdictions to plan for and accommodate those projections (62% of Whatcom County’s allocated units fall below 80% of the Area Median Income)
- » Requiring identification and addressing racially disparate impacts of existing housing policies

HB 1181 (2023) - Climate

This bill increased planning requirements related to climate change and resiliency, such as:

- » Adding a climate change element
- » Adding emissions reduction and resiliency sub-elements
- » Increasing requirements related to emissions and vehicles miles traveled (VMT)

HB 1110 (2023) - “Middle Housing”

This bill requires jurisdictions like Bellingham to allow the following:

- » At least four units per lot on residential lots
- » An additional two units per lot if affordable
- » At least six units per lot near transit like the Amtrak station
- » Only administrative design review based on objective standards

HB 1337 (2023) - ADUs

This bill is focused on limiting barriers to accessory dwelling unit (ADU) development. It has already been addressed by recent Bellingham legislation with changes such as:

- » Allowing two attached or detached ADUs per lot
- » Allowing ADUs up to 1000 square feet in size and up to 24’ in height
- » Prohibiting more stringent design review for ADUs than for single family residential structures
- » Prohibiting owner occupancy requirements (not in effect in Bellingham until HB 1337 applies)



CLIMATE ACTION

The City of Bellingham is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing the resiliency of our community to prepare for the coming impacts of climate change that we are already experiencing. Our climate work is guided by the city's Climate Action Plan.

Timeline of Recent Climate-Related Engagement

2017 - 2018

Outreach to community interest groups and a public hearing regarding Climate Action Plan update

2018 - 2019

Climate Task Force meetings open to the public, with subject specific meetings and a City Council public hearing

2019 - 2023

Climate workplan presentations to Council

2023

Engaged community members on discussions of three main topic areas: transportation electrification, building electrification, and renewable energy

Current Workplan Programs Include Approaches To:

- » Increase the use of electric vehicles
- » Reduce emissions in homes and other buildings
- » Plan and respond to extreme heat and wildfires
- » Assess risk for sea level and storm surge
- » Create and buy renewable energy
- » Consider community resilience facilities
- » Coordinate with other stakeholders across all sectors

How does this relate to “the Bellingham Plan?”

Consistent with House Bill 1181, signed into law in 2023, the City will be updating the Bellingham Plan to include a climate element (the most recently added mandatory element). This climate element will include goals and policies that:

- Focus on resiliency – improving climate preparedness, response, and recovery efforts
- Maximize economic, environmental, and social co-benefits and prioritize environmental justice
- Reduce overall emissions and vehicle miles traveled

Learn more about the City's Climate Action Plan at cob.org/climate.

For questions, email Seth Vidaña at savidana@cob.org

CLIMATE ACTION

The City of Bellingham is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing community resiliency to the impacts of climate change. Our climate work is guided by the city's Climate Action Plan and climate adaptation initiatives.

Current Climate Workplans Include Actions to:

- » Increase the use of electric vehicles
- » Support active transportation
- » Reduce emissions from homes and other buildings
- » Respond to extreme heat and wildfire smoke events
- » Assess sea level rise and storm surge risk
- » Create and buy renewable energy
- » Coordinate with partners and stakeholders

How does this relate to “the Bellingham Plan?”

Consistent with the passage of Bill 1181 in 2023, the City will be updating the Bellingham Plan to include a mandatory climate element. This climate element will include Resilience and Mitigation goals and policies that:

- Improve community resilience to climate change
- Prioritize climate justice
- Reduce carbon emissions from buildings and transportation
- Support renewable energy

Upcoming Climate Events:

The Bellingham Public Library is partnering with WWU's Sustainability Engagement Institute and Center for Community Learning to bring our community together to talk about sustainability, and you're invited! Please join us to share your hopes and challenges related to creating a more sustainable region and meet others doing inspirational work. We'll leave with new connections and opportunities for action!

Powering a Sustainable Future - Thursday, April 18, 2:30-4:00 pm

The Future of Work - Thursday, May 2, 2:30-4:00 pm

Constructing Resilient Communities - Thursday, May 16, 2:30-4:00 pm

Toward a Fair and Just Future - Thursday, May 30, 2:30-4:00 pm



Scan QR Code for event information

- Forums are free and open to all.
- Snacks provided!
- No registration required.
- All of the Forums will take place in the Lecture Room on the lower level of the Central Branch of the Bellingham Public Library (210 Central Ave).

Learn more about the City's climate programs



Contact the Mayor's Office of Climate staff for more information.

savidana@cob.org or cfogelsong@cob.org

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

How can we be friends?

We can....

Promote Energy Efficiency And Reduce Emissions

- Encouraging and funding the rehabilitation of existing homes can reduce operations and maintenance costs for renters and owners. Retrofitting homes can also build resiliency to climate change by improving insulation to reduce heating costs, adding cooling measures for heat events, and upgrading air filtration systems to improve indoor air quality due to wildfire smoke.
- Providing homeowners with information on energy efficiency project costs, projected cost savings, and the availability of rebates, incentives and other supportive funding programs will help homeowners make informed decisions.
- Replacing gas heating with electric heat pumps will reduce emissions and provide cooling as well as heating functions year round.

Reduce Urban Sprawl

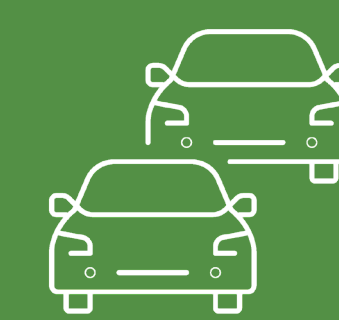
- Urban sprawl drives many challenges facing cities, including greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution, road congestion, and lack of affordable housing (OECD Report). It also increases the per-user costs of providing public services such as water, energy, sanitation, and public transport.
- Researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, found that for the 700 cities they studied, “infill housing — that is, homes built in existing urban areas, near transit, jobs and services — can reduce greenhouse gas pollution more effectively than any other option.” (Seattle Times)
- Cities can regulate development to allow for affordable and climate-friendly housing: denser housing, revised parking requirements, taller buildings, and transit-oriented development close to jobs and services.

Preserve Existing Housing

- The greenest building is the one already built: “Building reuse almost always yields fewer environmental impacts than new construction when comparing buildings of similar size and functionality.” - The Greenest Building – NTHP
- Marginalized groups are disproportionately cost burdened and more vulnerable to the effects of climate change (such as air pollution and climate disruption).
- Extreme weather events due to climate change can reduce the supply of affordable housing.



Image Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/energy-efficient-housing-made-more-affordable-mortgage-shachi-naidu/>

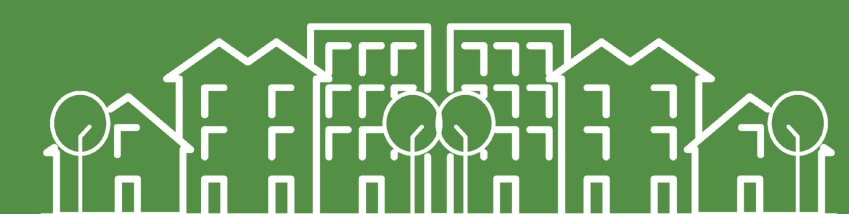


How can reduced parking standards support climate and housing goals?

Climate: A more compact city built for people, not cars, makes it easier to choose alternative transportation (walk, bike, or bus) and prevents sprawl.



Housing: Reduced parking supports compact growth, which reduces the cost of development and supports more affordable housing.



HOUSING AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

How our housing types and neighborhoods grow over time - and where development occurs - has an impact on the climate.

Design for Resilience

Housing can be designed to withstand climate impacts such as extreme weather, flooding, or heatwaves. Additionally, building in areas less prone to climate hazards (e.g., avoiding floodplains, wildfire-prone areas) can reduce the risk of climate-related damage.

Design or Retrofit for Energy

Incorporating energy-efficient technologies and designs (e.g. better insulation, energy-efficient windows, solar panels) can reduce the carbon footprint of houses. Implementing more stringent building codes and standards can help drive the development of climate-friendly housing.



Image Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/energy-efficient-housing-made-more-affordable-mortgage-shachi-naidu/>

Compact Development

Promoting higher-density development can reduce urban sprawl, lower emissions, and improve energy efficiency. Researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, found that for the 700 cities they studied, “infill housing — that is, homes built in existing urban areas, near transit, jobs and services — can reduce greenhouse gas pollution more effectively than any other option.” (Seattle Times)

Smart Growth and Transit-Oriented Development

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PLANNING & CLIMATE EMISSIONS

How we plan will impact Bellingham greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

In our daily lives, many actions we take – from heating homes to driving cars – cause the emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs). GHGs contribute to climate change by trapping heat, harming our health and the environment around us. As our city continues to grow, more GHGs could be emitted overall. We can work together to decrease these emissions and their impact on the climate.

Transportation of people and goods contribute the most carbon in Bellingham.

Building energy, especially **heating and cooling**, is most efficient in multifamily buildings with multiple units insulating one another.

Some **building materials**, like concrete, contribute more carbon emissions than others, like wood.

When buildings are farther apart, more material and construction emissions are required to provide **roads and utilities** to those buildings.



URBAN AREA

There will be fewer emissions in this scenario.

SMALL SCALE RESIDENTIAL AREA

There will be more emissions in this scenario.

SUBURBAN AREA

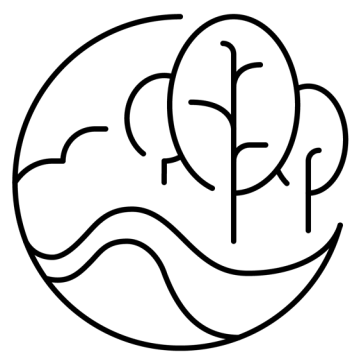
There will be the most emissions in this scenario.

Scan the QR code for more information on the City's climate emissions and goals.



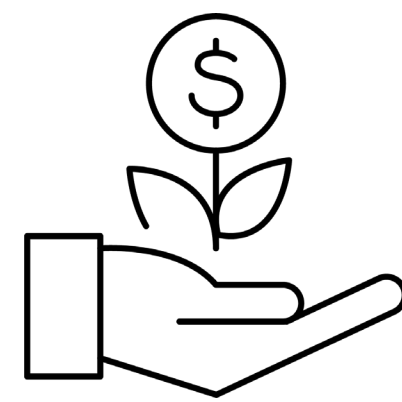
ECONOMIC VITALITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The relationship between climate change and economic vitality is multifaceted, with both challenges and opportunities for sustainable development and prosperity. Addressing climate change requires integrated strategies that consider economic, social, and environmental dimensions.



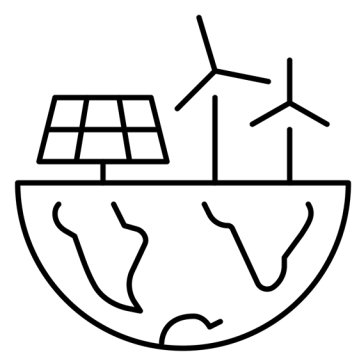
Impacts on Resources:

Climate change affects the availability and distribution of natural resources like water, agriculture, and energy, which are fundamental to economic activities.



Risk to Economic Stability:

Extreme weather events associated with climate change can disrupt supply chains, damage infrastructure, and lead to economic losses for businesses and the community.



Investment and Innovation:

While addressing climate change requires significant investment, mitigating and adapting measures can also spur innovation and economic growth. For example, investments in sectors such as renewable energy or green technologies* can create new jobs and industries, contributing to long-term vitality.



Social and Health Impacts:

Climate change can exacerbate social inequalities and health disparities, and that can affect economic productivity and resilience. For example, vulnerable populations may face increased risk from heatwaves, air pollution, or food insecurity. That, in turn, can lead to higher healthcare costs and reduced workforce participation. However, anyone can be vulnerable to these impacts of climate change.

***Results from our Fall 2023 vision survey indicate that the Bellingham community has a strong interest in encouraging sustainable or green industries:**

