

THE BELLINGHAM PLAN



ENVIRONMENT

Chapter Update Summary | November 2024





What the Community Said

These descriptions summarize the most common opinions we heard relevant to this chapter.

Most of us feel that a “healthy natural environment” is a major strength of Bellingham and we want it to stay that way.

In 20 years we want to see our city be healthy, clean, green, and sustainable.

Bellingham is outdoorsy and environmentally-minded!

The environment, recreation, and public open spaces are some of our most important community assets.

We care about trees, nature, and greenery, and these need to be balanced with growth and increased density.





Summary of Updates

We are proposing a variety of updates to our 2016 Comprehensive Plan. While the plan is divided into distinct chapters, there are updates that touch multiple chapters.

Here are the most significant updates related to the environment. Some of these themes may span multiple chapters beyond this one.

- >> Streamlining the chapter
- >> Inclusive and equitable planning
- >> Connected and resilient community
- >> Introducing a new climate chapter

Get a quick overview of the most significant updates we're proposing.

If you haven't yet, take a look at the [Summary of Proposed Updates](#). It describes the most significant updates we are proposing. We recommend viewing that the summary first, and then diving in here for more details on housing.



Environment Chapter Draft Topics

Each blue box represents a topic that will later become a goal in the Environment Chapter. These will be the overarching goals for the City, with more specific policies to support them.

Proposed Topics

Aquatic Ecosystems

Protect and improve the health of aquatic ecosystems.

Natural Resource Management

Protect and improve natural systems and ensure environmental sustainability through coordinated natural resource management.

Terrestrial Ecosystems

Protect and improve the health of terrestrial ecosystems.

Human Health and Environment

Recognize the interconnectedness of human health and the environment; provide a safe and healthful environment for people



Walking through the Topics

Now, we'll walk through an overview of the proposed updates for each goal. Each bubble represents a concept within that goal. Each concept may become a single policy or several in the final document.

Existing Concept

This concept exists in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan already.

Some Updates

Either this concept will be emphasized more than in the current plan, or something minor is being changed about it.

**New Concept/
Major Updates**

This concept does not exist in the 2016 plan at all or will include significant changes.



This icon indicates this concept is related to state requirements or legislation.



Community Feedback

**As you learn about the concepts proposed in this chapter,
think about...**

**Is anything big
missing?**

**Are you excited or
concerned about any
of the ideas proposed
here?**





Aquatic Ecosystems

Terrestrial Ecosystems

Natural Resource
Management

Human Health and
Environment



Protect and restore aquatic habitats and corridors

Protect and restore water quality and quantity

Address hydrologic processes for water quantity; address water quality, especially in waterbodies with listed water quality impairments

Lake Whatcom Management Program

Streamlines policies related to Lake Whatcom to not reiterate what is covered in the management program

Storm and Surface Water
Comprehensive Plan

To prevent water quality degradation and improve conditions in receiving waters impacted by development

Protect and restore fish habitat and fish passage

Per RCW 36.70A.172, also gives emphasis to anadromous fisheries

Existing

Update

New



Aquatic Ecosystems

Terrestrial Ecosystems

Natural Resource
Management

Human Health and
Environment



Protect and restore terrestrial
habitats and corridors

Identify and protect open space
corridors

*Per RCW 36.70A.160, identify open space within
and between urban growth areas*

Maintain and restore geologic
processes

*Protects bluffs, landslides, seeps, and erosion
hazards for their ecological function*

Comprehensive Urban Forest
Plan

*Speaks to vision and purpose of the Urban Forest
Plan without reiterating the specific goals,
strategies, and actions within it*

Existing

Update

New



Aquatic Ecosystems

Terrestrial Ecosystems

Natural Resource Management

Human Health and Environment



Adopt and utilize best available science

Natural resource assessments, plans, and regulations

Collaboration with partner agencies, non-profits, and tribes

City coordination for private and public development

Sustainable land use and design elements

Apply mitigation strategies

Reduce impacts from unprogrammed uses

Balance natural resources with development

Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan

Promote native plants and control invasives

Public awareness and stewardship

Speaks to importance of balancing competing interests – such as housing and trees

Existing document to be emphasized in the plan; protects people and environment from natural hazards

To promote ecological functions, restoration of natural systems

Existing practice to be emphasized in the plan

Add tribes to the list of collaborators

Existing

Update

New



Aquatic Ecosystems

Terrestrial Ecosystems

Natural Resource
Management

Human Health and
Environment



Equitably distribute environmental benefits, minimize environmental burdens, and help people connect to nature

Environmental equity

Consider the environmental, economic, and social value of trees; encourage tree preservation and planting

Promote urban tree canopy

Outdoor air quality

Safe disposal of hazardous and other waste

Cleanup of contaminated sites (remediation)

Discourage herbicides, pesticides, and toxic chemical use

Existing

Update

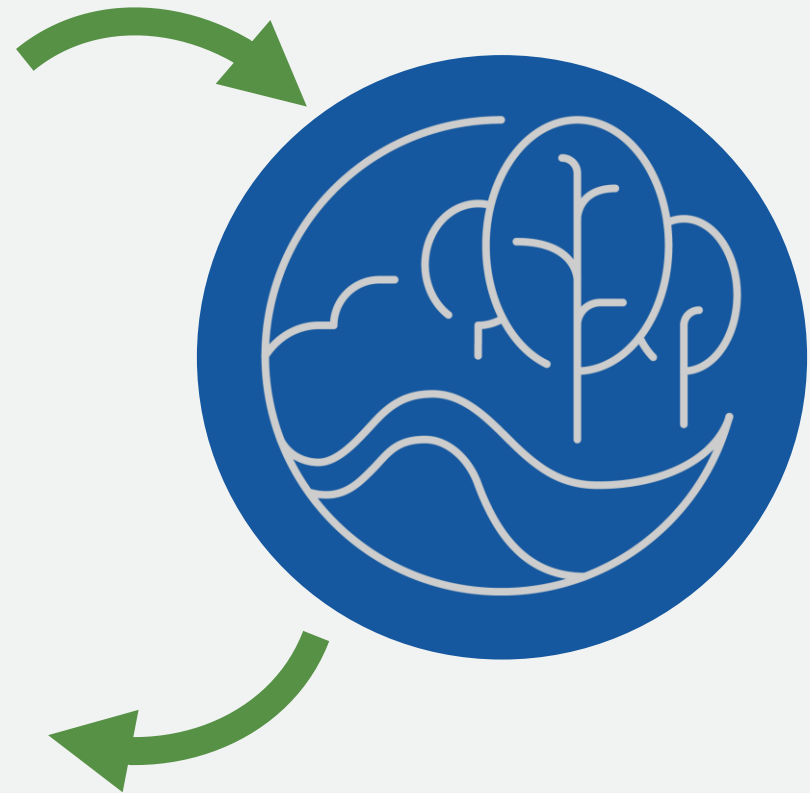
New



Structural Changes

Are you familiar with the 2016 Comprehensive Plan and looking for a topic that was in that Environment Chapter?

It may be located in another part of the plan. The next few slides will show how the proposed updates relate to the 2016 Environment Chapter.





2016 Environment Chapter Topics

The 2016 Comprehensive Plan Environment Chapter is organized around these 9 topics. Each one is written as a goal in the plan.

Drinking Water

Limit Lake Whatcom
Development

Ecological Functions and
Habitats

Lakes, Streams, and
Salish Sea Health

Urban Forest

Air Quality

Limit Urban Sprawl and
Promote Sustainable
Land Use

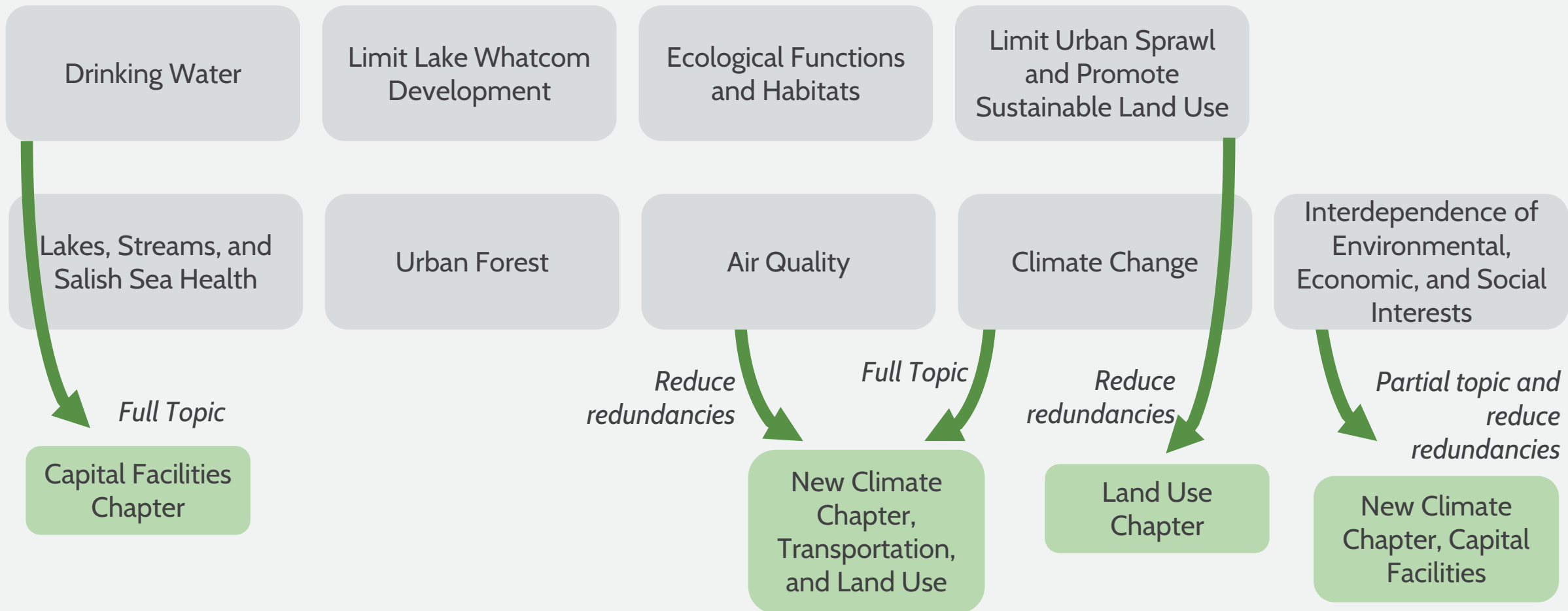
Climate Change

Interdependence of
Environmental,
Economic, and Social
Interests



Shifts out of Environment Chapter

Some concepts have been moved to other chapters in the proposed updates.





Shifts within Environment Chapter

Other concepts have been shifted or split between each of the proposed topics.

2016 Plan Topics

