



**Board of County Commissioners
Board Work Session
Wednesday, August 27, 2025
9:00 AM
3000 Pacific Avenue, Room 110**

Written public comment may be received up to two hours in advance of the meeting and will be distributed to the Board of County Commissioners. Action may be taken at this meeting.

This meeting will be recorded and posted to the [Thurston County YouTube Channel](#) within 24 hours.

AGENDA

- I. Comprehensive Plan Review: Climate
- II. Budget Update
- III. Commissioners Items
 - 1. Proposed PacMtn Interlocal Agreement

Disability Accommodations: Room 110 is equipped with an assistive listening system and is wheelchair accessible. To request disability accommodations, call the Reasonable Accommodation Coordinator at least 3 days prior to the meeting at 360-786-5440. Persons with speech or hearing disabilities may call via Washington Relay at 711 or 800-833-6388.



Board of County Commissioners Briefing Presentation Form

Title

2025 Periodic Comprehensive Plan Update

Date

07/16/2025

07/23/2025

07/30/2025

08/06/2025

08/20/2025

09/03/2025

09/17/2025

Board Meeting

AM Board Work Session

Office/Department

Community Planning & Economic Development

Staff Contact

Maya Teeple, Senior Planner

Derek Day, Community Planning Manager

Ashley Arai, CPED Director

Attachments

- Attachment: Briefing PowerPoint
- Attachment: Reference Sheet - Intro to Comprehensive Planning
- *Digital Only:* [Planning Commission Public Hearing Draft](#)
- *Digital Only:* [Written Public Comments and Attached Letters](#)

Type

☒

Informational

☐

Follow up/Continued work session

Primary Objective

Community Planning will present seven 30-minute briefings on key topics of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, or 'Thurston 2045'. Each will cover Growth Management Act requirements for the focus topics, major changes, public comment themes, and Board decision points.

Staff Recommendation

Following the briefing series on Thurston 2045, staff recommends scheduling a public hearing.

Background

Thurston County is completing a periodic update to its comprehensive plan ("plan"). This update to the plan is a requirement every 10 years and occurs on a set schedule under Washington's Growth Management Act, RCW 36.70A.130. Associated development regulations must also be updated to comply with state law and to ensure consistency with any new policy changes to the plan. Thurston County's periodic update is due December 31, 2025.

Beyond updating the County's plan to reflect recent changes in state law, the periodic update also updates community visions, population growth projections, and housing projections. Goals and policies are updated across the plan to reflect these new projections and changing local trends.

First adopted in 1975, Thurston County's Comprehensive Plan had its last major update in December of 2019. Since then, annual amendments have been made to the plan to address mineral lands designation (2020), joint plans (2021-2023), the Grand Mound Subarea Plan (2023-2024), and agricultural designation (2024).

The plan has 14 chapters and several appendices. It guides climate, land use, environmental and natural resource protection, community health, housing, transportation and infrastructure, cultural resources, economic development, and more for Thurston County over the next 20 years. The plan provides a broad framework that guides future county decisions around development regulations, grant applications, programs, funding, and more.

Major updates and policy decisions as part of the 2025 update include:

- Addition of a new climate chapter that addresses climate resilience and mitigation.
- Limiting rural industrial uses to natural resource industries.
- Additional protection of rural resource lands and habitat areas.
- A shift to no more than 5% rural growth in unincorporated county.
- Changes to housing projections and regulations to ensure the County can accommodate housing affordable to all income brackets.
- Innovative techniques such rural detached Accessory Dwelling Units and density bonuses for conservation subdivisions with small home sizes or additional conserved resource spaces.
- Updates to development regulations to bring regulations into consistency with changes in state law or to support proposed policy changes in the plan.
- A new implementation plan appendix to provide a menu of future actions to implement policies and metrics for future monitoring.

Two chapters were not included in the scope of work for the 2025 update. These are included for reference but have no proposed updates:

- Chapter 8 – Economic Development and Chapter 11 – Health.

Public participation is an essential component for updating the plan. The GMA requires early and continuous public participation. As part of the Thurston 2045 public outreach effort, staff have conducted more than 30 community engagement efforts through attending other external stakeholder events and meetings to provide updates, have hosted virtual and in-person open houses, and have held over 36 meetings with the Planning Commission including 2 public hearings.

Budget Impacts/Requests

There are no budget impacts/requests. The periodic update is funded by general fund and \$1 million in grant funding from Washington Department of Commerce. Delaying the project into 2026 will have additional impacts on general fund, and impacts to other docket-item projects.

Others Affected

County residents, visitors, businesses, and multiple county departments.

Timeline/Next Steps

Additional briefings are scheduled to cover remaining topics. New attachments (PowerPoints and Reference Sheets) will be provided for each briefing. Additional briefings may be scheduled at the boards request.

1. Wednesday, July 16, 2025	Overview – GMA, Review Process and Public Participation
2. Wednesday, July 23, 2025	Rural Land Use & Zoning
3. Wednesday, July 30, 2025	Capital Facilities / Utilities / Transportation / CIP
4. Wednesday, August 6, 2025	Natural Resources
5. Wednesday, August 20, 2025	Parks, Open Space, Environment, and Recreation / Historic Resources; <i>Planning Commission Recommendation (tentative – will be plugged in once received)</i>
6. Wednesday, September 3, 2025	Climate
7. Wednesday, September 17, 2025	Housing / Environmental Review



Thurston 2045: Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update



Board of County Commissioners Briefing

August 27, 2025

Climate Change and Comprehensive Planning



Mitigation
Strategies

Climate Element

Transportation

Housing

Environment, Rec, Open Space

Natural Resource Lands

Land Use and Zoning

Capital Facilities and Utilities



Resiliency
and
Adaptation

Climate Trends in Thurston County



Temperatures have risen 2.4 °F in last century and will keep rising. By 2100, 90-degree or warmer days will increase by 62 days a year.



Summer rainfall and winter snowpack will lessen, and winter rain will increase, **affecting groundwater and streamflow.**



Higher seas in the Puget Sound and heavier rains will increase flooding, especially in low-lying areas.



Wildfires are becoming more common and intense. We'll see more smoky days and worse air quality.

Climate – State Law Requirements



A climate element is required and must contain resiliency and greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction sub-elements.



Must result in reductions overall in greenhouse gases.



Avoid creating or worsening localized climate impacts to vulnerable populations and overburdened communities.

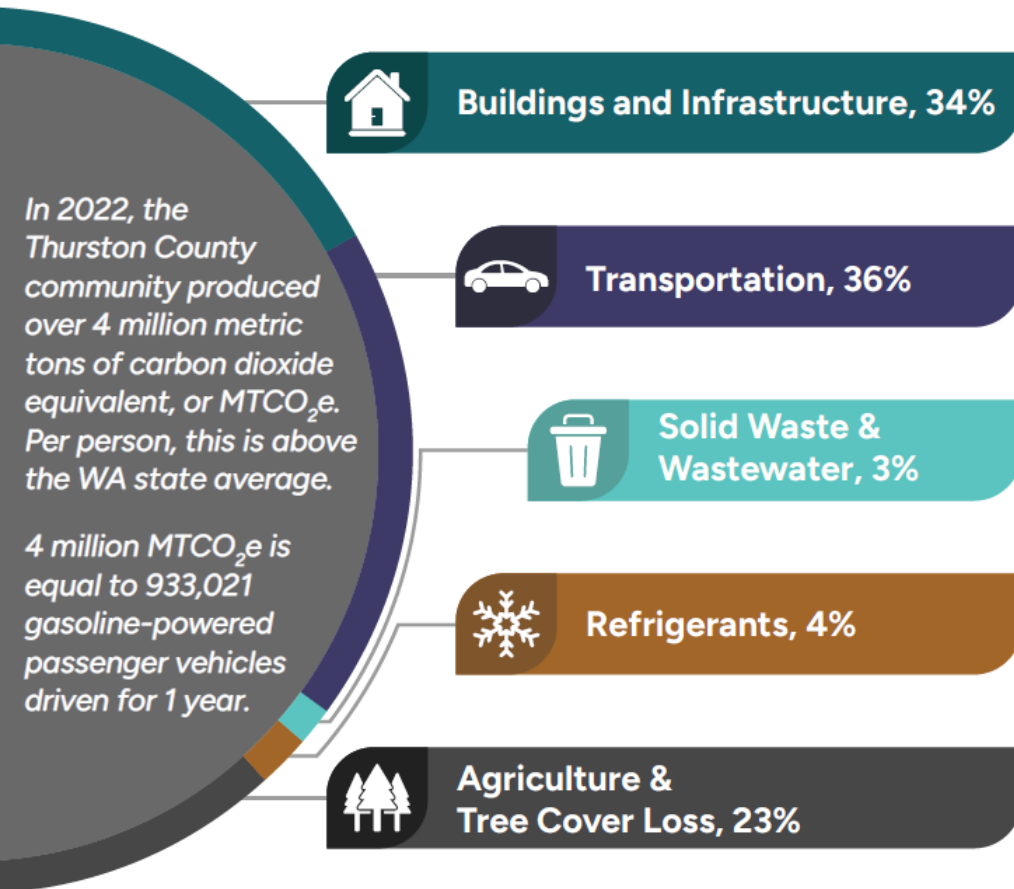


Identify actions the jurisdiction will take to reduce GHG emissions.



Prioritize reductions that benefit overburdened communities.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Thurston County



Building energy consumption, on-road vehicle travel and canopy loss are largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions in Thurston County

New State Law & Agency Guidance

Local Studies

- Thurston Climate Adaptation Plan (2018)
- Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan (2020)
- Hazard Mitigation Plan (2023)
- Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan (2025)
- Thurston County Vulnerability Assessment (2025)

New Agency Guidance

- HB1181 added a climate element with GHG mitigation and resiliency sub-elements as a requirement of comprehensive plans.
- Commerce guidance on climate element and climate planning.

Climate-Specific Engagement

- **Two** climate & housing community forums, June 2024
- Participated in Thurston Climate Action Team (TCAT) Community Assembly, February 2025 and led a session at Thurston Climate Mitigation Forum May 2025
- One-on-one coordination between staff & TCAT
- Staff developed a detailed matrix for Planning Commission and public to crosswalk Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan and draft Comp Plan
- **Four** PC work sessions dedicated to reviewing climate matrix and specifically addressing TCAT comments

Key Themes from Public Comment

Integrate actions
from Thurston
Climate Mitigation
Plan.

Expand policies for
wildlife corridors
and community
forests.

Incorporate
guidance on sea
level rise adaptation.

Recommend actions
to reduce
greenhouse gases.

Address how climate
impacts could affect
habitat, wildlife and
migration patterns.

How is Thurston County leading the way?

- Regional leadership on resiliency and adaptation
 - Watershed scale adaptive planning
 - Climate-informed stormwater management
 - Habitat protection and forestry
 - Local climate and water resource modeling
 - Incentives for Ag-related climate strategies
- Innovative and equity-centered policies that prioritize co-benefits to overburdened communities in rural County.
- Building on foundation of previous climate work with focus on rural communities.
- Strategic regional collaboration through the Thurston Climate Mitigation Collaborative.
- Concrete strategies; practical, measurable metrics; and a list of programmatic, plan and code changes to achieve reduced GHG emissions and increased resiliency (within the Implementation Plan, Appendix B).

Climate – Policy Questions

- *None.*

Next Steps

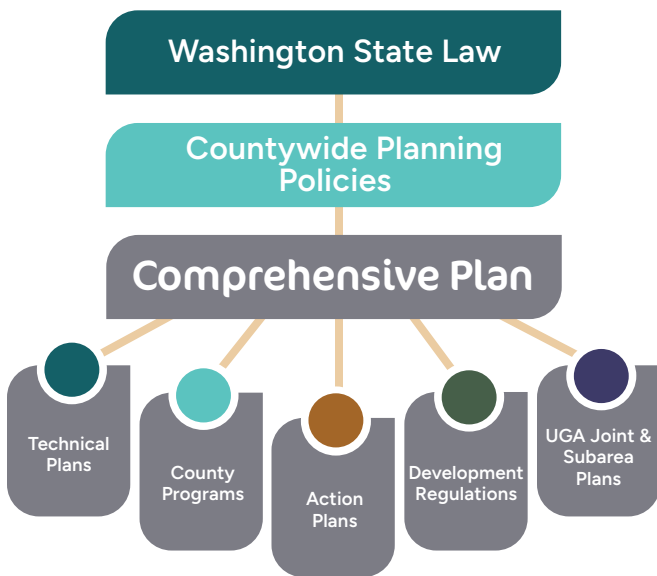
- Board Work Sessions – July through September
- Public Hearing – October
- Final Board Action – December

1	Wednesday July 16, 2025	Overview of the Periodic Comprehensive Plan Update
2	Wednesday July 23, 2025	Rural Lands and Land Use
3	Wednesday July 30, 2025	Capital Facilities; Utilities; and Transportation
4	Wednesday August 6, 2025	Natural Resources
5	Wednesday August 20, 2025	Environment, Recreation and Open Space; Historic Resources
6	Wednesday August 27, 2025	Climate
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Climate (Chapter 2)

BoCC Work Session: Thurston 2045 | August 27, 2025

The new Climate chapter addresses key climate issues the Thurston County community is facing. It focuses on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, protecting natural areas, and making sure every community—especially those most affected by climate change—can adapt and thrive.



Related Plans and Codes

- [Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan and Adaptation Plan](#)
- [Thurston Climate Mitigation Collaborative](#)
- [Thurston Climate Vulnerability Assessment](#)

Applicable State Laws

- [RCW 36.70A.070\(9\)](#)—Mandatory Elements, Climate
- [HB 1181](#)—Summary of Climate Requirements

Policy Questions

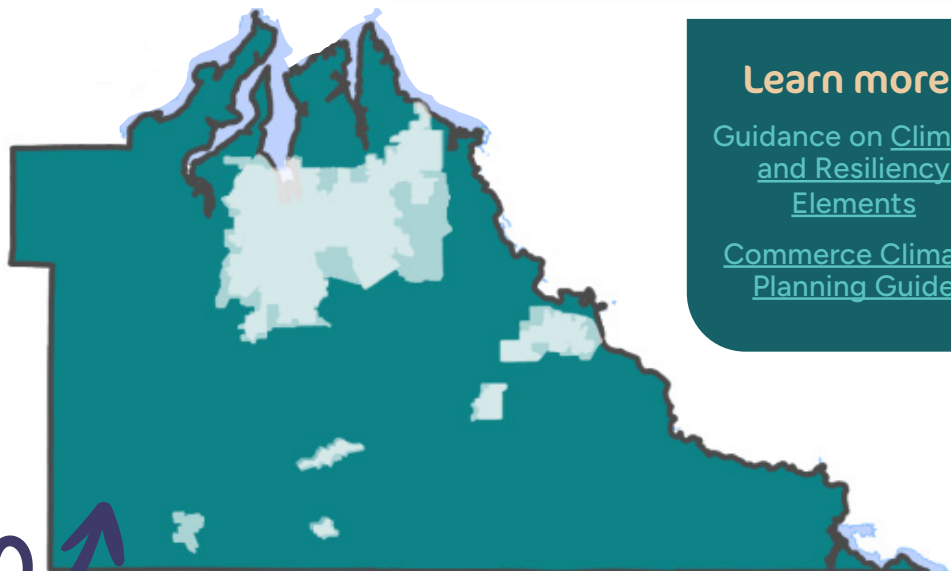
- *None for climate and resiliency.*

Key Themes from Community Feedback

- ✓ Integrate Thurston Climate Mitigation plan actions into comp plan.
- ✓ Expand wildlife corridor and community forest policies.
- ✓ Incorporate policy to use California Coastal Commission for sea level rise adaptation.
- ✓ Recommend actions to reduce greenhouse gases.

BLUE areas are covered by the Thurston County Comprehensive Plan.

WHITE areas are covered by City Comprehensive Plans or Urban Growth Area Joint Plans.



Learn more!

[Guidance on Climate and Resiliency Elements](#)

[Commerce Climate Planning Guide](#)





EMISSIONS REDUCTION

Thurston County's 2025 Comprehensive Plan guides growth and development over the next 20 years. The update adds a new **Climate Chapter** to meet new Washington State requirements. The chapter focuses on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and strengthening our community's resilience to a changing climate.

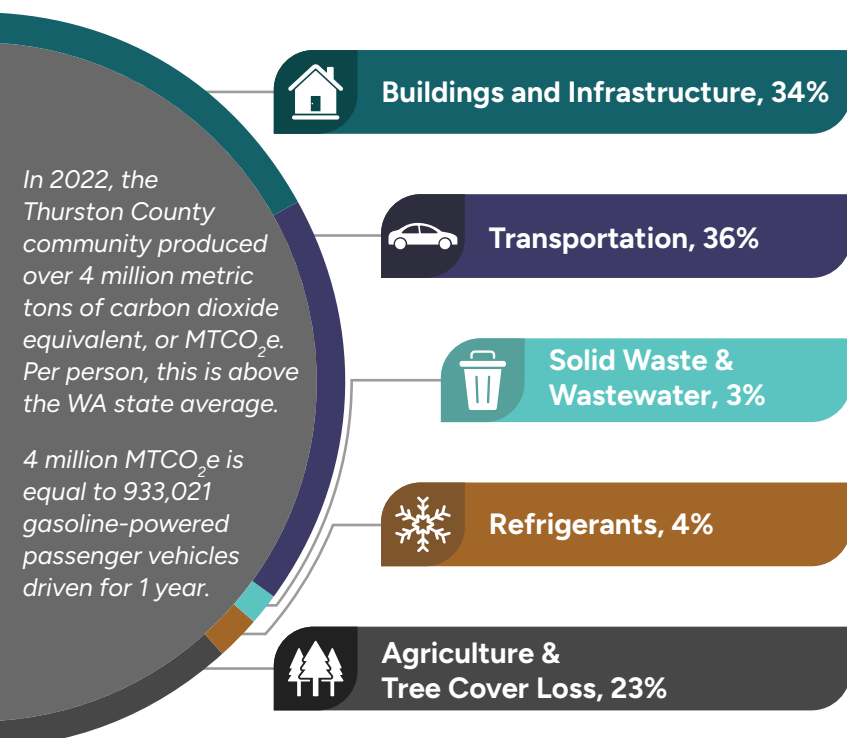
WHAT ARE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS?

When we burn fossil fuels like gasoline, coal, and natural gas, we increase greenhouse gases in our atmosphere, which trap and absorb heat. This can increase temperatures and throw off natural weather cycles. As the population grows, emissions will likely rise.

HOW DOES THIS IMPACT MY COMMUNITY?

Have you noticed hotter summers, heavier rains, longer droughts, and more wildfire and smoke? Reducing GHGs is essential to keeping our weather more predictable. This is important for how we manage water, grow food, and protect what we love about where we live.

GHG Emissions in Thurston County



This graphic includes all county emissions. Focusing on activities like home energy use, travel, waste and wastewater, it shows that residents are only responsible for 67% of the county's overall emissions. The remaining comes from:

- » Industrial, 2%
- » Agriculture, 2%
- » Forests and land-use change, 20%
- » Other non-residential sources, 8%

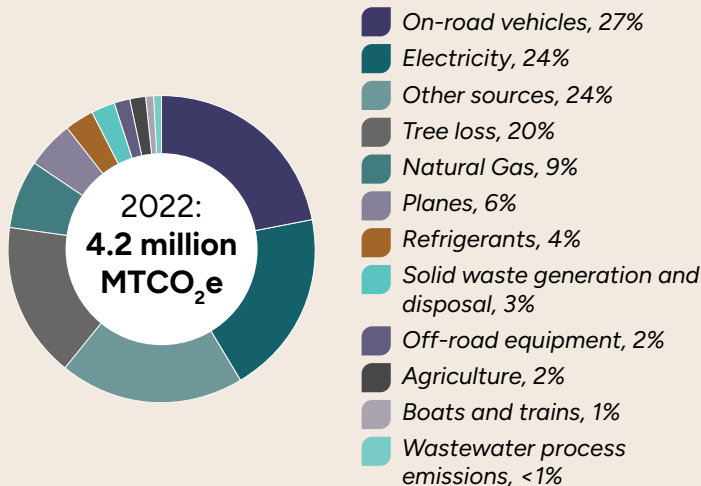
GHG emissions are measured in metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, or MTCO_2e . One metric ton is about 2,205 pounds. Emissions of other gases like methane are converted into the amount of CO_2 that would cause the same warming effect.

Thurston County is Taking Action

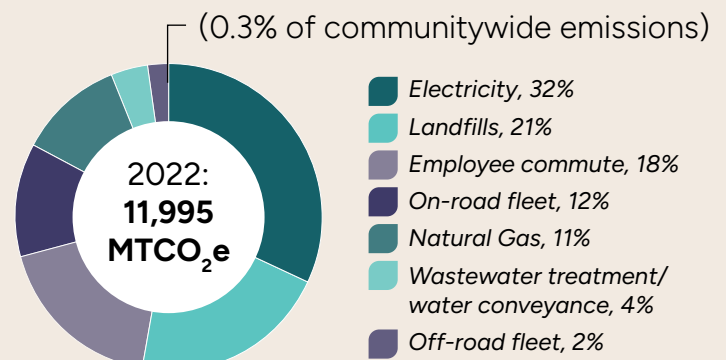
Taking action will require effort from everyone—government, businesses, communities, and residents.

Thurston County is focusing on reducing emissions from **communitywide activities** and **county government operations**.

COMMUNITYWIDE EMISSIONS SOURCES








COUNTY OPERATIONS EMISSIONS SOURCES



Source: Washington Department of Commerce, 2024

How Will We Meet Reduction Targets?

The Climate Chapter includes policies to reduce emissions by:

-  Reducing energy use in new and existing buildings.
-  Transitioning to renewable energy sources that improve energy efficiency measures.
-  Planning communities to make it easier for people to walk, bike, or catch the bus.
-  Expanding access to electric vehicles by adding more charging stations and promoting cleaner, more efficient vehicles.
-  Protecting natural areas that absorb carbon, like forests and farmland, by managing them wisely, preventing tree loss, and planting more trees.

OUR COUNTY'S GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSION REDUCTION TARGETS

- » **45%** reduction by 2030
- » **70%** reduction by 2040
- » Net-zero* emissions by 2050 (**95%** reduction)

*Net-zero emissions means that the amount of emissions released into the atmosphere is equal to the amount



CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Thurston County's 2025 Comprehensive Plan guides growth and development over the next 20 years. The update adds a new **Climate Chapter** to meet new Washington State requirements. The chapter focuses on reducing local greenhouse gas emissions and strengthening our community's resilience to a changing climate.

Climate Hazards in Thurston County

Thurston County is already experiencing climate impacts. Flooding, droughts, wildfire, heatwaves, and other extreme events are affecting Thurston County residents and businesses.

Have you noticed hotter summers, heavier rains, longer droughts, and more wildfire and smoke? We have too, and our data confirms what we are experiencing. To take care of our water, grow our food, and protect what we love about where we live, we need to understand how the climate is changing and what it means for our community.

What can we expect?



WARMER TEMPERATURES

By 2100, Thurston County is likely to have 76 days per year that feel warmer than 90 degrees, which is 62 *more* days than the historical average of 14 days per year.



INCREASED WILDFIRE RISK AND WILDFIRE SMOKE

Wildfires are becoming more common and more intense. We'll see more smoky days and worse air quality.

CHANGES IN PRECIPITATION: Drier summers and rainy winters

We'll have drier summers and heavier rains in winter. This will affect how much water we have for our community, streams, lakes, fish, and other species.



RISING SEA LEVELS & FLOODING

Higher seas in the Puget Sound and heavier rains will increase flooding - especially in low-lying areas.

How Does This Impact Me and My Community?

With less snow, we'll have less hydropower. Using more energy—especially in the summer—could lead to blackouts or brownouts.



Wildfire smoke and heat can take a toll on our health – especially for kids, older adults, families with fewer resources, and outdoor workers.



While large wildfires are rare in Thurston County, climate change is increasing wildfire risk across the county.



Extreme heat and flooding can damage roads and infrastructure.

Warming seas, acidification, and stormwater pollution are making it tougher for shellfish to thrive. This means less safe and local seafood that Thurston County enjoys!



Rising temperatures and saltwater moving into our freshwater threaten our drinking water, forests, and wildlife.



Rising sea levels in Puget Sound could flood low-lying homes and businesses, and erode shorelines.



Hotter, drier weather could make farming more challenging and increase the risk of fires within the County.



What We're Doing About It

Building resilience to climate impacts means everyone needs to pitch in—government, businesses, communities, and individuals. Thurston County has a strong history of working together regionally on this, with plans like the Climate Adaptation Plan and Climate Mitigation Plan leading the way.

How will we build resilience?

The Climate Chapter includes policies to build climate resilience by:



Prioritizing support for those who feel climate change impacts the most: families with fewer resources, seniors, outdoor workers, and vulnerable populations.



Improving how we **prepare for and recover from** big storms, wildfires, and other extreme weather so our communities stay safe and strong.



Collaborating with Tribes and communities to **protect cultural sites, landmarks, and natural resources** that face risks from flooding, wildfires, and other climate impacts.



Adopting climate-smart strategies to **protect and restore our forests, prairies, and waterways**, helping them adapt to a changing climate.



Creating safe, welcoming places **where people can cool down, get help during disasters, and stay connected** with their community.