



CITY OF
TUMWATER

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
MEETING AGENDA**

**Online via Zoom and In Person at
Tumwater Fire Department
Headquarters, EOC, 311 Israel Rd. SW,
Tumwater, WA 98501**

**Tuesday, September 12, 2023
6:00 PM**

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
- [3.](#) Addressing Food Insecurity and Access (Mike Matlock)
- [4.](#) 2022 Green Team Sustainability Report (Alyssa Jones Wood)
- [5.](#) Tumwater Climate Work Program Discussion (Alyssa Jones Wood)
6. Mayor/City Administrator's Report
7. Adjourn

Meeting Information

All Councilmembers will be attending remotely. The public are welcome to attend in person, by telephone or online via Zoom.

Watch Online

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83590065929?pwd=UUJFQjNWNk9uaDlvWHFwN3k3NXIldz09>

Listen by Telephone

Call (253) 215-8782, listen for the prompts and enter the Webinar ID 835 9006 5929 and Passcode 255077.

Public Comment

The public may submit comments by sending an email to council@ci.tumwater.wa.us, no later than 4:00 p.m. the day of the meeting. Comments are submitted directly to the Councilmembers and will not be read individually into the record of the meeting.

Post Meeting

Video recording of this meeting will be available within 24 hours of the meeting <https://tcmedia.org/channels.php>.

Accommodations

The City of Tumwater takes pride in ensuring that people with disabilities are able to take part in, and benefit from, the range of public programs, services, and activities offered by the City. To request an accommodation or alternate format of communication, please contact the City Clerk by calling (360) 252-5488 or email CityClerk@ci.tumwater.wa.us. For vision or hearing impaired services, please

contact the Washington State Relay Services at 7-1-1 or 1-(800)-833-6384. To contact the City's ADA Coordinator directly, call (360) 754-4128 or email ADAcoordinator@ci.tumwater.wa.us.

TO: City Council
FROM: Michael Matlock, Community Development Director
DATE: September 12, 2023
SUBJECT: Addressing Food Insecurity and Access

1) Recommended Action:

None at this time. This is a discussion item to discuss City Council concerns about addressing food insecurity and accessing food resources.

2) Background:

City Council has requested a worksession agenda item to discuss address food insecurity in Tumwater and methods the City can use to foster practices in the community that support accessing food resources.

3) Policy Support:

Strategic Priority: Build a Community Recognized for Quality, Compassion and Humanity.

4) Alternatives:

☐ None

5) Fiscal Notes:

Minimal staff time at this point. If the City Council would like to undertake specific actions, the time required to do so would need to be factored into City staff work programs.

6) Attachments:

- A. Memorandum
- B. Presentation
- C. Spokane Regional Food Action Plan 2022
- D. Whatcom County Food System Plan 2023

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 12, 2023
 To: City Council
 From: Michael Matlock, Community Development Director



Addressing Food Insecurity and Access to Food

The City Council has requested time at a work session to discuss the capacity in the community to address food insecurity, and how the City can support and foster activities that more efficiently promote access to food in the community.

Contents

Background	1
Supporting Access to Food	2
Effective Ways to Access Food	2
What the City Currently Does	3
Food Assistance	3
Other Food-Related Activities.....	4
Food Sharing	5
Food Action/System Plans	5
Spokane Regional Food Action Plan 2022	5
Whatcom County Food System Plan 2023	7
Staff Recommendation	7

Background

Similar to housing, access to food is a fundamental human right.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Economic Research Service, food insecurity can be understood as the lack of access to or the limited availability of nutritionally adequate foods that prevents all household members from leading active and healthy lives.

According to the USDA, food security is defined as “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.” According to the statistics of the USDA Economic Research Service, 10.2 percent of households in the United States were food insecure at some time in 2021.¹ While the prevalence of food insecurity in Washington is below the United States average at slightly below eight percent, it is still an issue.² The Urban Institute issued a report in March 2023 that based on their surveys from December 2021 and December 2022 the number of adults reporting food insecurity in the last year increased from 20 percent to 24.6 percent.³

Food-insecure households are not necessarily food insecure all the time, but food insecurity is reflected in the choices households sometimes need to make between meeting basic needs such as housing, health and child care, and purchasing nutritionally adequate foods.

While financial stability and economic empowerment remain the necessary conditions to ensure that everyone in the community can meet their food and nutrition needs, multiple approaches have been undertaken to address food insecurity throughout the country. These approaches include a wide range of actions, for example, federal and state food benefit programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program, senior and school meal programs, community support for food delivery services, food banks, mobile food pantries, community-based food distribution, and community gardens and agricultural programs.

Supporting Access to Food

Effective Ways to Access Food

One way to address food insecurity is to focus on supporting ways to access food more effectively. Effective ways of accessing food use formal and informal networks to ensure food is available, easy to get to, and supports healthy, nutritional options for everyone in the community.

This considers everything from wholesalers, retailers, restaurants, coops, and farmers markets to the charitable food sector. Looking at how to access food more effectively can also consider the role of local and community-based agriculture activities, such as community gardens and local producers and processors.

¹ “Household Food Security in the United States in 2021”, Economic Research Report No. (ERR-309)

² <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/key-statistics-graphics/#map>

³ “As Inflation Squeezed Family Budgets, Food Insecurity Increased between 2021 and 2022: Findings from the Well-Being and Basic Needs Survey”, Urban Institute, March 2023.

What the City Currently Does

Food sharing and resources for assistance with housing, food, and utilities are promoted using multiple platforms for outreach, including the City website, social media channels, Tumwater on Tap eNews, utility inserts, and flyers. Information is available to staff to assist with inquiries from residents.

The City provides in-kind support, financial contributions, and community grant opportunities to non-profit and community organizations that provide food assistance to youth, adults, and seniors through these programs:

- FRESH Farm at Isabella Bush Park (Together! and Tumwater School District)
- Garden Raised Bounty (GRuB)
- Senior Services for South Sound
- Summer Youth Employment Program
- Tumwater Community Garden Grant Program
- Tumwater School District Summer Lunch Program
- Tumwater Youth Summer Camp
- Thurston County Food Bank (satellite operations)
 - Old Town Center
 - Tumwater Fire Station
- United Way of Thurston County (employee fund drive)

Community Food Assistance Programs

Some of the community organizations that provide food assistance for Tumwater residents include the following:

Emergency Food Assistance

- Adventist Community Service Center
- Bread & Roses Community Kitchen
- Bread Basket Ministries
- Capital Christian PEACE Center
- Church of Living Water
- Churches from Catholic Charities
- City Gates & Street Lights Ministries

- Evergreen Christian Community

Food Banks, Food Pantries, and Community Kitchens

- Old Town Center (provided by Thurston County Food Bank)
- Olympia Union Gospel Mission – Emergency Outreach Program
- Sacred Heart Catholic Church
- Salvation Army Community Kitchen
- St Vincent de Paul
- The Community Kitchen (CCSSW)
- Tumwater Fire Station (provided by Thurston County Food Bank)

Food Assistance for Seniors

- Meals on Wheels - Senior Services for South Sound
- Providence Sound Home Care
- Senior Nutrition Program Meal Sites
- State Department of Social and Human Services Tumwater Office
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Thurston County Public Health & Social Services

Other Community Resources

- Community Action Council of Lewis, Mason, Thurston Counties
- First Steps Maternity Services
- Garden Raised Bounty (GRuB)
- SeaMar Community Health Center
- South Puget Sound Intertribal Planning Agency
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Thurston County Health Department
- Veterans Assistance Fund
- Women, Infants, Children (WIC) Program

Other Food-Related Activities

The City currently allows the following food-related activities in the City:

- **Agriculture Up to 30 Acres in Size** in all single-family areas and the lowest-density multifamily areas (18.42.070)
- **Agriculture with No Size Limit** in light industrial areas
- **Breweries, Wineries, and Distilleries** in specific commercial and industrial areas
- **Community Gardens** in almost all residential, commercial, and industrial areas
- **Farmers Markets** in all commercial and industrial areas
- **Food Banks, Mobile Food Pantries, and Community-based Food Distributions Centers** in areas of the City where similar uses like those above are allowed or as an accessory use to a church or community center
- **Food Processing** in all industrial areas
- **Food Trucks or Trailers**, individually or in courts, in all commercial and industrial areas
- **Restaurants** in most commercial and industrial areas
- **Retail Sale of Food** in all commercial and some industrial areas
- **Retail Sale of Food Processed on Site** in most industrial areas

Food Sharing

One approach to accessing food for those who are in need is through food-sharing programs. Councilmember Jefferson provided a 2011 article “Policies for a Shareable Community” that focused on food-sharing programs to councilmembers last month to review in advance of the work session. The article described ways in which city policies can support the community’s ability to share in the access to food. The article contained a number of good suggestions that the City is currently allowing or supporting.

Based on staff research, since the 2011 article was published, many jurisdictions are taking a more holistic approach to how to address food insecurity. One approach to doing this is to create a food action or system plan.

Food Action/System Plans

Food action or system plans take a holistic approach in looking at how a jurisdiction could work with its community partners to support all the steps in the food system from growing food to putting food on the table.

Spokane Regional Food Action Plan 2022

The City of Spokane adopted the [Spokane Food Policy Council’s Regional Food Action Plan](#) in May 2022 to create a framework for regional food system stakeholders and partners to use when building a more resilient food system in the Spokane area. The Plan was intended to

promote a healthy and equitable food system that is advantageous to the local economy and protective of the environment.

The Spokane Food Policy Council's Regional Food Action Plan was intended to enhance community health through the following actions:

- Preserving farmland and recruiting new farmers increasing local food production and adding to our local economy.
- Advocating for policies that enable residents and businesses to make and process their food locally.
- Providing broader access to high-quality food and disseminating better food and nutrition education to empower people to make healthier choices for themselves and their families.
- Reducing food waste through gleaning, redistribution, and composting to support food security and the environment.

The Plan's focus on supporting the desire for healthy food for all included looking at the following actions with a large list of community partners:

- Creating opportunities for people to grow and share their own food, including the following:
 - Promoting existing and emerging educational programs for home and community gardening, cooking, and food preservation.
 - Increasing land availability for community gardens.
 - Supporting sustainable food systems and urban agriculture education.
- Support and grow equitable food access, including the following:
 - Identifying and reducing barriers to accessing food.
 - Expanding community-supported agriculture (CSA) offerings to SNAP-eligible populations.
 - Promoting expansion of food distribution routes to low-resource areas.
 - Assessing service capacity needs of food pantries and identifying opportunities for shared resources.
 - Advancing equity in the food system.
- Supporting programs and policies that help children, adults and seniors get healthy food, including the following:
 - Increasing enrollment of eligible people into SNAP, WIC, school meals and other government nutrition programs.

- Advocating for public and private food assistance programs.

Whatcom County Food System Plan 2023

Whatcom County Council adopted the [Whatcom County Food System Plan](#) in June 2023. The intent of the plan was to create a more equitable and sustainable food system in Whatcom County over ten years.

The focus of the plan is broad and includes five separate goals:

Goal 1: Cultivate equity and justice in our food system

Goal 2: Protect and regenerate our soil, water, and land

Goal 3: Build a resilient and vibrant local food economy

Goal 4: Ensure access to healthy food for all

Goal 5: Mitigate emissions from food system activities and adapt the food system to a changing climate

Focusing on addressing food insecurity and access, Goal 4 of the Whatcom County Food System Plan includes a number of objectives and specific actions on a local level, including:

4.1 Build and design our communities to ensure food access and eliminate food deserts

4.2 Create and promote opportunities for people to grow, prepare, and share their own food

4.3 Invest in programs that make healthy food more affordable

4.4 Scale up food recovery efforts in Whatcom County

Each of these objectives includes actions that range from specific policy or regulatory actions undertaken by the County to collaborative and educational actions with the community.

Staff Recommendation

If the City Council determines that it would like staff to address this issue in more detail, then staff recommends the development of a Food System Plan for the City be added to the 2024 long-range planning work program. Staff would suggest that the Plan focus holistically on how to provide healthy food for all members of the community, reduce food waste, and support local food processing.

The Food System Plan should focus on determining which activities have the most impact in addressing the core food insecurity issues identified by the City Council. The Plan would identify

how to eliminate barriers, address gaps in the current system, and come up with appropriately scaled solutions that the City could work with its community partners to implement in the City. Some form of monitoring should also be considered.

The Plan could also include identifying how the City will maintain and update resource materials through its jurisdictional and community partners.

Addressing Food Insecurities and Access to Food

City Council Work Session,
September 12, 2023



Food Security & Insecurity

10.2 %

of households report food insecurity (2021)

20-24.6 %

of adults reporting food insecurity in the last year (2023)



Addressing Food Insecurity

- Federal and state food benefit programs such as SNAP and WIC
- Senior and school meal programs
- Community support for food delivery services, food banks, mobile food pantries, and community-based food distribution
- Community gardens



Access to Food

One way to address food insecurity is to focus on supporting ways to access food more effectively.

This considers everything from:

- wholesalers,
- retailers,
- restaurants,
- coops,
- farmers markets



Food Access – City Supported Programs

The City Council currently supports and works with a number of community organizations to address access to food, including:

- FRESH Farm at Isabella Bush Park (Together! and Tumwater School District)
- Garden Raised Bounty (GRuB)
- Senior Services for South Sound
- Summer Youth Employment Program
- Tumwater Community Garden Grant Program
- Tumwater School District Summer Lunch Program
- Tumwater Youth Summer Camp
- Thurston County Food Bank (satellite operations)
- United Way of Thurston County (employee fund drive)



Other Food Related Activities

The City currently allows the following food related activities in the City:

- Agriculture
- Community Gardens
- Farmers Markets
- Food Processing
- Food Trucks or Trailers, individual or in courts
- Restaurants
- Retail Sale of Food, including Food Processed on Site
- Food Banks, Mobile Food Pantries, and Community-based Food Distributions Centers



Food Sharing



Food System Plans

- Preserving farmland and recruiting new farmers increasing local food production and adding to our local economy
- Advocating for policies that enable residents and businesses to make and process their food locally
- Providing broader access to high-quality food and disseminating better food and nutrition education to empower people to make healthier choices for themselves and their families
- Reducing food waste through gleaning, redistribution and composting to support food security and the environment



Spokane Regional Food Action Plan



Farmland Preservation



Increase Local Food Processing



Healthy Food for All



Reduce Food Waste



Whatcom County Food System Plan

Goal 1: Cultivate equity and justice in our food system

Goal 2: Protect and regenerate our soil, water, and land

Goal 3: Build a resilient and vibrant local food economy

Goal 4: Ensure access to healthy food for all

Goal 5: Mitigate emissions from food system activities and adapt the food system to a changing climate



Staff Recommendation

1. Development of a Food System Plan.
2. The Plan focus on how to provide healthy food to the community, reduce food waste, and support local food processing.
3. Eliminate barriers, address gaps in the current system, and produce solutions to implement at appropriate scale.
4. Maintain and update resource materials through its jurisdictional and community partners.



Discussion & Questions



SPOKANE REGIONAL FOOD ACTION PLAN 2022



Farmland Preservation



Increase Local Food Processing



Healthy Food for All



Reduce Food Waste

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3

FARMLAND PRESERVATION 4

INCREASE LOCAL FOOD PROCESSING 9

HEALTHY FOOD FOR ALL 13

REDUCE FOOD WASTE 17

APPENDIX 21

 How This Plan Was Developed 21

 Research Agenda..... 22

 Goals Summary 23

 Spokane Food Policy Council 27

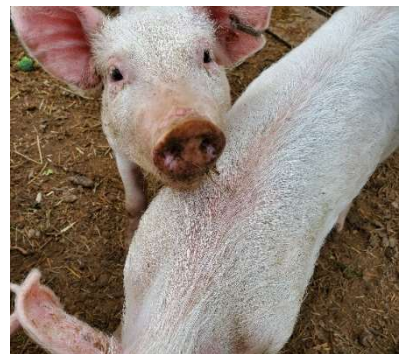
 Acknowledgments..... 28

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Food, the most basic of human needs, is easily taken for granted in a society of abundance. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the fragility of our current food system. The goal of the Spokane Food Policy Council's Regional Food Action Plan is to create a framework for regional food system stakeholders and partners to use when building a more resilient food system in the Spokane area. The plan promotes a healthy and equitable food system that is advantageous to the local economy and protective of the environment.

The Regional Food Action Plan was developed by conducting a food policy audit, an online food system community survey, and two virtual community forums in 2020. Approximately 350 food system stakeholders including producers, processors, distributors, consumers, and waste managers informed the plan by completing the survey or attending a community forum. The feedback was analyzed by the Spokane Food Policy Council, who identified four priorities for our regional food system: Farmland Preservation, Increasing Local Food Processing, Healthy Food for All, and Reducing Food Waste.



The Spokane Food Policy Council's Regional Food Action Plan will enhance community health through the following actions:

- Preserving farmland and recruiting new farmers increasing local food production and adding to our local economy.
- Advocating for policies that enable residents and businesses to make and process their food locally.
- Providing broader access to high-quality food and disseminating better food and nutrition education to empower people to make healthier choices for themselves and their families.
- Reducing food waste through gleaning, redistribution and composting to support food security and the environment.

FARMLAND PRESERVATION

Preserve farmland directly through public policy and indirectly by helping regional farms be more economically viable

Develop a promotion package for the local food and farm economy

Helping local food systems businesses to be more financially viable will help keep farmland in production. Research and interviews completed as part of this Food Plan project suggests that consumers are more likely to buy locally produced food when they have convenient access to information about availability of products. Many of our regional food producers struggle to find markets for their products. The Spokane Food Policy Council (SFPC) recommends developing a media campaign, utilizing multiple channels (print, radio, internet, television, social networking, bus placards and other promotional materials) to promote purchase of local foods and healthy eating. This campaign might also include a publicly available database designed to connect buyers with regional producers.

Complete a socioeconomic study of positive impact of the local food production sector

One way of accurately estimating potential economic growth is through a socioeconomic impact study. The SFPC recommends a partnership of food system stakeholders be assembled to coordinate development of a socioeconomic analysis of the regional food system around Spokane's foodshed. It should be the goal of this stakeholder group to develop plans for such a socioeconomic study, including developing specifications, identifying prospective contractors, and finding funding to execute the study.

This type of study aims to quantify the impact of a particular change, such as a new revenue stream, investment, event, or policy, on the economy in terms of dollars. Socioeconomic analysis estimates economic, social, environmental, and financial costs and benefits for all stakeholders affected by a change. By translating both costs and benefits into monetary units, socioeconomic evaluation allows derivation of combined net value. Combined socioeconomic value can be positive even when net financial value is negative. Socioeconomic analysis accounts for externalities that traditional economic analyses often omit.

While some pre-existing data is available for analyses, obtaining original primary data is the key to producing a final report that is relevant to existing conditions and most useful to stakeholders and decision makers. The process of designing a socioeconomic impact study would:

- Define the scope or boundaries of the study
- Classify which economic variables to consider and map their interdependencies
- Identify key values and key indicators for economic analysis
- Identify potential data sources and negotiate data access
- Develop methodologies for gathering primary data through interviews and surveys
- Gather supporting data
- Determine what information and evidence must be included in the analysis
- Develop a picture of the current regional food economy and make targeted projections of the Spokane foodshed's economic future under various change scenarios
- Explain the sources of data and be transparent about how calculations were reached
- Present clear results useful for decision making that demonstrate stakeholder costs and benefits

A well-executed socioeconomic analysis would be an important starting point toward finding funding for a whole array of work related to strengthening local food systems and developing rural and urban agricultural economies. Reliable economic figures demonstrating contributions of local agriculture and food systems would serve to inform local and state officials and expand networks of allies and partners to include economic developers and members of the business community.

Develop processes and structures for improving food systems stakeholder input on regional policy

The Comprehensive Plans and Zoning Ordinances of Spokane County as well as the cities within the county are continually and regularly reviewed, amended, and updated. SFPC favors policy in these plans that preserves farms and promotes growth in the local farm business sector. Recent land-use decisions by both city and county planners have brought into focus how difficult it is to preserve farmland when zoning code is interpreted as favoring development at the expense of farmland preservation. Regional and local planning processes should be made more accessible for the average person to engage in to advance the needs of the community.

Convene a working group to create framework for updating local Comprehensive Plans to strengthen farmland preservation policies and revitalize the local food system

The SFPC recommends a working group be convened, consisting of community food system stakeholders. This group would create a structure for organized policy development, public outreach, engagement, and advocacy around amending the Comprehensive Plans and Zoning Ordinances pertaining to food systems in the county and every applicable city within the county. As part of this process, sub-working groups would be established, including one for the county and one for each applicable city. These groups would continue to identify working group members, community stakeholders and decision makers relevant to their jurisdictions. Sub-working groups would propose policies and campaigns organized in support of adoption of those proposals in each jurisdiction.



City of Spokane Sustainability Action Sub Committee formalize collaboration with the SFPC

The 2021 Sustainability Action Plan (SAP) is an update to the City's 2009 Sustainability Action Plan and was adopted by the Spokane City Council in 2021. The Sustainability Action Subcommittee developed this update over a period of 2 ½ years, including input from the Spokane Food Policy Council. The SAP recommends that the city and its community partners “support the Spokane Food Policy Council (SFPC) in studying, identifying, and implementing sensible and achievable codes, policies, and requirements that eliminate barriers and reduce costs for urban farms and community gardens and expand local control of food grown, processed, and sold directly to consumers.” The SFPC recommends that a representative of the Sustainability Action Subcommittee be tasked with serving as a liaison with the SFPC, attending SFPC meetings as necessary for regular communication.

Improve access to farmland

Support the establishment of a state funded farm-link program with referral and support services to facilitate the transfer of farms to farmers and take advantage of available federal programs



Farm Link and similarly named programs connect land seekers with landowners who want their land to stay in agriculture. Administered by public or private entities, they offer a range of services and resources, from online real estate postings to technical assistance, trainings, and educational resources.

The American Farmland Trust (AFT) report, *Farms Under Threat* (2020), surveyed how each state ranks as they deploy policies and programs that foster better farmland preservation. While AFT highlights some

strengths in Washington, such as a purchase of agriculture easements program, the Growth Management Act, and tax relief for agricultural lands, they also note that Washington does not have a state-funded “Farm Link” program with referral and support services that would facilitate transfer of farms to farmers and assist them in taking advantage of available federal programs.

Washington Farmland Trust’s Farm to Farmer (F2F) program is a service that provides land access to a new generation of farmers, helps farmers find the land opportunities they need to grow their businesses, and helps landowners sell or lease their land to keep it in farming. F2F programs offer technical assistance to current and aspiring farmers, farming and non-farming landowners, veterans, real estate agents, and organizations looking to expand their incubator or agricultural park programs. SFPC supports establishing state funding to expand the reach and effectiveness of the F2F program.

Increase funding for purchasing agricultural conservation easements

The SFPC recommends development of a program to advocate for increased conservation easement funding at the federal, state, and local levels.

Create a County-level farmland preservation program

Spokane is the fourth most populated county in the state. As of the 2017 USDA Census of Agriculture, Spokane County had 548,535 acres of farmland, almost half of the county’s total land area, and produced an estimated \$117 million of agricultural products yet the county government has no farmland preservation program. The SFPC favors Spokane County creating such a program. SFPC recommends Spokane County study farmland preservation programs from other counties, such as King, Skagit, and Snohomish counties, then work with regional stakeholders to develop a similar program for Spokane County.

Influence Spokane Conservation Futures to encourage more nominations of working farmland into its acquisition portfolio

Spokane County's Conservation Futures program has purchased farmland, but typically puts that farmland into recreational conservation rather than keeping it as working farmland. The enabling state legislation under which the Conservation Futures program is codified states "it is in the best interest of the state to maintain, preserve, conserve and otherwise continue in existence adequate open space lands for the production of food, fiber and forest crops." The Conservation Futures program could choose to prioritize keeping land it manages in agricultural production, as has been done in other counties that could serve as a model for Spokane, such as Skagit County. The SFPC recommends that Spokane County's Conservation Futures program place a higher priority on keeping agricultural land it manages in agricultural production.

Increase farm labor availability

Educate farmers on farm labor options and business structures

Input from producer stakeholders during the data gathering process for this plan indicates that farmers have a need for more education and outreach on options available to them with respect to business structures (e.g., partnerships, collectives, and cooperatives) and different options for compensating owners and farmworkers. The SFPC recognizes that at least some of training of this type is available from other food systems stakeholders (e.g., WA State Dept. of Agriculture, WA State University Extension, Northwest Farm Credit Service, etc.) but barriers still exist that prevent access to training. The SFPC recommends a working group be developed to identify barriers to farmers accessing business related training and gaps in available training, then find funding and develop programs fill gaps and remove barriers.



Educate farmers about the Farm Internship Pilot Program available through the Washington Department of Labor and Industries

In 2014, the Legislature authorized the Farm Internship Pilot Program in Washington State (expires 2025). This program allows interns to work on small farms in select Washington counties including Spokane County. Farm interns learn about farming practices and gain hands-on experience with farming activities. Interns participating in this program are exempt from minimum wage requirements and are not required to be paid. Instead of a wage, farm interns receive education and experience about specific farming activities and are entitled to industrial insurance protections while participating in their internship.

The Farm Internship Pilot Program was critiqued during the stakeholder input process, but further research is needed to understand problems perceived by farmers related to its structure and accessibility. The SFPC recommends convening a process that would engage stakeholders in assessing the utilization of the internship program and its successes and failures. The aim of this process would be to identify any problems with the existing program and propose solutions to improve it and make it available to all regions across the state.

Strategies	Recommendations	Potential Partners
Create visibility for local farms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate a campaign for City- and County-funded local food production support and promotion. Put together a promotion package for the local food and farm economy. Complete an economic study of positive impact of the local food production sector. 	Washington State University (WSU) economists, Spokane Community Indicators, SpokaneTrends.org, Spokane County Information Systems Department, Spokane County Communications Office, VisitSpokane.com, GSI Inc, SRHD, Spokane Board of Health, Teri Stripes, <i>Economic Development Specialist</i> , City of Spokane, Local media outlets, Live Local INW, Spokane Independent Metro Business Alliance (SIMBA)
Create a framework for updating local Comprehensive Plans to strengthen farmland preservation policies and revitalize the local food system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene a working group to create framework. Identify working group stakeholders and representatives from the jurisdictions. Work in coordination with the City of Spokane Sustainability Action Sub Committee. 	Cities of Spokane County, City of Spokane Sustainability Action Subcommittee, Spokane Conservation District, Spokane Farmland Preservation Working Group, American Farmland Trust, WSU Extension
Improve access to farmland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the establishment of a state funded farm-link program with referral and support services to facilitate the transfer of farms to farmers and take advantage of available federal programs. Increase funding for purchasing agricultural conservation easements. Create a County-level farmland preservation program. Influence Spokane Conservation Futures to encourage more nominations of working farmland into its acquisition portfolio. 	Washington Farmland Trust's Farm to Farmer program, Washington State Office of Farmland Preservation, Washington State Food Policy Forum, American Farmland Trust, State legislators, Cara McNab, USDA, WA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator, Washington Farmland Trust, Spokane County, Agrarian Trust
Increase farm labor availability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate farmers on farm labor options and business structures. Make a permanent internship program that is accessible to farmers and meets their needs. Educate farmers about the Farm Internship Pilot Program available through the Washington Department of Labor and Industries. Assist farmers in developing their required educational curricula. 	Washington Department of Labor and Industries, Northwest Cooperative Development Center, Small Business Administration, State Legislators

INCREASE LOCAL FOOD PROCESSING

Broaden Scope of Cottage Food Legislation

Promote entrepreneurial development of small-scale food business in Washington State by broadening existing Cottage Food legislation, modeled after more progressive laws in other states.

Cottage Food Legislation in the US

Many small-scale local food processors get their start by utilizing the cottage food law. These small businesses tend to be run by rural women looking to produce additional household income. In urban areas, cottage food entrepreneurs tend to be people with traditionally limited access to capital, including people from BIPOC communities. A Washington State Cottage Food Permit allows individuals make and sell processed foods in their primary residential kitchen. Currently, forty-nine states and Washington, D.C. allow for cottage food sales. However, the specifics of these laws vary widely from state-to-state, with differences regarding types of food that may be produced and sold, where those foods are allowed to be sold, registration, licensing, permitting, or inspection requirements, labeling requirements, and more. Some states have enacted “food sovereignty” legislation, further broadening the range of food production operations that can operate legally. In 2019, Forbes magazine reported that there hasn’t been a single food borne illness outbreak related to food sovereignty legislation in Wyoming, North Dakota, and Utah since the adoption of legislation in 2015, 2017, and 2018 respectively.



Cottage Food Law in Washington State



To receive a Cottage Food Permit, Washington resident must pay a \$230 application fee, and have a comprehensive residential kitchen inspection. Processing times take up to six months in some cases, and the \$230 application fee must be paid annually for permit renewal. The list of food products that can be sold under a WA State Cottage Food permit is limited and does not include many of the higher value boutique items food entrepreneurs typically wish to produce, such as low-sugar preserves or acidified low acid vegetables (pickles).

Washington’s Cottage Food law also limits how sales of home-produced products can occur to direct-to-consumer sales (such as farmers markets), eliminating the opportunity to sell indirectly to restaurants and through retail outlets, for example.

Recommendations for Change

The Spokane Food Policy Council (SFPC) recommends that Washington State immediately modify its existing cottage food law to:

- Broaden the list of foods that can be produced and under a Cottage Food license to include all hermetically sealed shelf stable (canned or jarred) foods made primarily from fruit and or vegetables, as well as foods which require refrigeration
- Broaden Cottage Food law to allow in-state indirect sales, including wholesale and restaurant sales
- Increase the Cottage Food license term to at least two years
- Increase sales caps under a Cottage Food license from \$25,000 to \$50,000 per year
- Adopt more progressive food legislation modeled after food sovereignty laws that exist in Wyoming, South Dakota, and Utah. These states allow consumers the freedom to choose for themselves who produces the food they eat.

Promote WSDA Custom Processing of Multi-Owner Meat Animals

Make share animal ownership and WSDA Custom processing more convenient and reform meat processing regulation at a federal level.

Meat Processing Law in the US

In the US, meat processing of hooved animals is regulated from the federal level, requiring that any beef, pork, lamb, goat, etc. sold retail, by the cut must be processed in a federally licensed (USDA) facility. States are not permitted to adopt related regulation which is less stringent than federal regulation. Federal meat processing laws are considered by many to be a primary cause of local meat processing



capacity bottlenecks. In recognition of supply chain problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic combined with these bottlenecks, both federal and state governments are currently making unprecedented levels of funding available for building and expanding regional meat production and processing capacity.

Meat Processing Law in Washington State

Existing federal and state laws allow hooved animals to be processed in a WA State regulated (WSDA) “Custom Processing” facility if meat from that animal goes to owners of the animal. There is no limit to the number of owners any animal can have. This little-used provision of existing regulation could be leveraged to enable more convenient by-the-cut processing of meat animals in Custom processing facilities without changing any existing laws.

Recommendations for Change

Shared Meat Animal Ownership and WSDA Custom Processing

The SFPC recommends that tools and processes be investigated (from other regions), developed, and implemented to facilitate convenient group ownership and WSDA Custom processing of meat animals using existing laws. This might include the following:

- Review shared meat animal best practices used in other states, provinces, and countries
- Work with stakeholder groups to develop and promote a shared meat animal program
- Develop a public implementation document describing shared meat animal best practices and appropriate required legal documents to assist producers in adopting the model

Meat Law Reform at the Federal Level

The SFPC generally favors local and regional control over food system issues. The existing USDA blanket prohibition against selling meat retail by the cut from state-inspected processing facilities presents an unwarranted barrier to the success of local and regional livestock producers and processors.

The federal PRIME Act (S. 2001, H.R. 3835) offers a potential solution by proposing to amend the Federal Meat Inspection Act to exempt from USDA inspection the slaughter of animals and the preparation of carcasses conducted at custom, state-licensed slaughter facilities for sale within each state. The SFPC recommends engaging livestock producer and processor stakeholder groups in an exploration of the PRIME Act as well as a review of other current laws and regulations. This would allow stakeholders to:

- Engage in constructive networking
- Identify policy priorities
- Propose regulatory modifications
- Explore other options for improving regional access to meat processing facilities
- Building regional meat processing capacity



Strategies	Recommendations	Potential Partners
Increase availability and convenience of local meat and meat processing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support state funding of agricultural programs designed to build small and mid-scale and regional meat producer capacity. • Take steps to facilitate shared meat animal ownership so that consumers can more conveniently purchase meat processed by state licensed Custom meat processors. • Form a stakeholder group of meat producers and processors to explore options for improving regional access to meat processing facilities and/or building up regional meat processing capacity 	Beefing Up the Palouse, WSU WA Meat Up Production Program, WSDA Regional Markets Program, WSDA Food Safety Program, Local 'custom' meat processors, The Farm Bureau, Past members of the C P o W Livestock Processors, Cooperative Association formerly of Odessa, WA, Weston A. Price Foundation, Farm to Consumer Legal Defense Fund, Heritage Foundation
Improve value of a Cottage Food legislation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand list of foods permitted by existing Cottage Food Law to include refrigerated items, acidified low acid products. • Remove recipe restrictions for jams, jellies, and preserves. • Raise the income cap under Cottage Food law to \$25,000 per year. • Extend the term of a Cottage Food license to two years. • Expand allowable sales venues to include wholesale and internet sales. • Enact Food Sovereignty legislation modeled after laws in more progressive states. 	SRHD, WSDA Regional Markets Program, WSDA Food Safety Program, Institute for Justice, Cottage Food Licensees

HEALTHY FOOD FOR ALL

Create opportunities for people to grow and share their own food.

Promote existing and emerging educational programs for home and community gardening, cooking, and food preservation.

In Spokane County, the Washington State University (WSU) Extension programs SNAP-Ed, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), and Master Gardeners provide food education. In addition to WSU Extension, Second Harvest's teaching kitchen, Catholic Charities' Food For All, the Women and Children's Free Restaurant, and local food pantries also lead nutrition education, cooking classes, and promotion of healthy food resources in the community. Connecting these education providers and promoting their programs will ensure they are reaching vulnerable persons in our region through food education.

Increase land availability for community gardens.



Community gardens may improve food security by increasing access to and consumption of fruits and vegetables and reducing barriers to healthy food such as transportation and cost. Participating in a community garden promotes neighborhood engagement and development of a healthy local food environment.

There are several examples of successful food policies that our region could draw from. In Seattle, Washington the city allocated funding for their "P-Patch community garden program." This established a role for the Director of Neighborhoods to waive or reduce fees for community garden plots for low-income

individuals. The P-Patch community garden program also increases land available for gardens by allowing the Director to manage the leases of property for gardens (Code 3.35.060-0.80, Healthy Food Policy Project).

Support sustainable food systems and urban agriculture education.

Vets on the Farm and Vinegar Flats Farm provide urban agriculture education in Spokane County. These programs create opportunities from early childhood to Veterans transitioning back to civilian life. Participants gain skills in agriculture, farming, and land conservation. In collaboration with other organizations, these programs cultivate future farmers and sustain our food systems.

Support and grow equitable food access.

Identify and reduce barriers to access food.

Second Harvest, the hub for regional charitable food distribution since 1971, supplies a network of more than 100 food banks, meals sites, and other programs responding to food insecurity in Spokane County. Northwest Harvest and Feed Spokane also provide essential foods to local pantries and meal sites. Ensuring food assistance availability in all neighborhoods and outlying rural communities has been a priority. There are challenges, however, throughout the primarily volunteer-driven network with limited hours for food pantry service and client intake requirements that lead to barriers for people needing help with food access.

Catholic Charities Food For All, Farm to Food Pantry initiative is an example of increasing access to food while supporting local growers. In partnership with WSDA and Harvest Against Hunger, Food For All purchases produce from local farmers and distributes to pantries throughout Spokane County.

Extraordinary food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic shined a much brighter light on food access barriers for vulnerable populations. Second Harvest ramped up Mobile Market free food distributions to fill service gaps and worked with partner food banks to limit client intake to simply counting people served. Second Harvest, Northwest Harvest, and Feed Spokane, in collaboration with the Spokane Food Security Coalition, are actively assessing partner food bank capacity and exploring opportunities for expanded hours in their pantry network.

Expand CSA offerings to SNAP eligible populations.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) increases consumer access to fresh produce. A 2016 study by Cornell University evaluated 300 low-income household's participation in a cost-offset CSA (CO-CSA). Families reported increased food security and higher fruit and vegetable intake after participation in CO-CSA.

Farmers offering CSA to SNAP recipients face barriers such as needing a point-of-sale (POS) device to process the EBT transaction and ensuring their CSA includes all SNAP eligible foods. Reducing these barriers and offering financial and educational support to farmers will get fresh produce to low-income populations in our region.

Promote expansion of food distribution routes to low resource areas.



Through the Mobile Market program, Second Harvest works closely with community centers, churches, schools, health clinics, senior centers, youth programs and other organizations to increase healthy food access points, providing free food distributions to people in need where they are located. Since the program's launch in 2006, Second Harvest has come to better understand the value of the "pop-up pantry" model in which the Mobile Market is rooted.

Opportunities to tailor distributions to low resource areas and homebound populations are being explored by local organizations such as pilot food delivery projects led by the Spokane Food Fighters, Special Mobility Services, Growing Neighbors, and online retailers such as Walmart and Safeway. This adaptability will help ensure that families receive nutritious, practical food supplies.

Assess service capacity needs of food pantries and identify opportunities for shared resources.

Spokane residents and community organizations would benefit from greater access to community kitchens and cold storage. Sharing resources for refrigeration and freight access allows pantries to store and distribute perishable foods to underserved communities including fresh dairy, proteins, fruits, and vegetables.

Local organizations identified a need for shared kitchen space to prepare ready-to-eat foods. An evaluation of the region's available commercial/kitchen space may identify opportunities for food preparation. For example, the city of New York is seeking to establish a partnership between city and county stakeholders and local school districts. Schools may open their kitchens to community organizations when school is not in session, such as holidays and summers to increase kitchen access and support local small-business producers.



Advance equity in the food system.

The fundamental human right to adequate food for all requires the pursuit of expanding food security programming with equity in mind and creating low-barrier pathways for food access. The ZoNE, the backbone of a collective action partnership of Northeast Spokane residents, schools, and community organizations, has built new partnerships to reach neighbors with culturally aware food assistance supported by community health workers and other volunteers.

Work is ongoing to identify and cultivate partnerships with organizations that can help break down barriers to reach diverse populations. The Washington State University Food Systems Program recently published a report that identified the needs and barriers of underserved, food-insecure Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and other socially disadvantaged communities. This work was funded by the WSDA and demonstrates a regional commitment to an inclusive, culturally relevant, and equity-based food system. The SFPC will support BIPOC-led teams, farmers, producers, distributors, and advocates by acknowledging the gaps in our current system and inviting participation from BIPOC communities and people with lived experience being food insecure and utilizing food aid regionally.

Support programs and policies that help children, adults and seniors get healthy food.

Increase enrollment of eligible people into SNAP, WIC, school meals and other government nutrition programs.

SNAP, WIC, and other government assistance programs provide essential food resources for people with low incomes. The population eligible for programs such as SNAP and WIC continue to grow as more residents experience food insecurity due to the impacts of COVID-19. The Washington State Food Security Survey was administered in 2020 and found that 30% of respondents experienced food insecurity. To reach the expanding eligible population, barriers to applying for public assistance must be addressed. Overcoming these barriers may include increased communication from local agencies to the public, continued expansion of hours and accessibility of WIC offices, and efforts to reduce the stigma associated with utilizing SNAP and WIC dollars.



The Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program was created in 2020 in response to families need for nutritional resources as schools closed due to COVID-19. P-EBT provided households with the value of free school meal rates on an EBT card for the days schools were closed (\$5.70/day). Among households receiving P-EBT, it is estimated that 2.7-3.9 million children were lifted out of hunger (The Hamilton Project – Brookings). Washington Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) administered P-EBT in partnership with schools and other community stakeholders. The success of P-EBT demonstrates that similar models for food assistance and vouchers can reduce food insecurity and benefit the broader economy (Food Research & Action Center)

Advocate for public and private food assistance programs.

SNAP and WIC are proven to reduce hunger, promote financial stability and self-sufficiency (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities). These programs also bring millions of dollars into the community for food purchasing. The Spokane Food Policy Council and community partners will advocate for sustaining and expanding SNAP and WIC benefits to increase food security and health for our region's population.

The Washington State Department of Health in partnership with Farmers Markets and Food Retailers across the state, offer *SNAP Market Match* and *SNAP Produce Match* programs. Match programs increase SNAP recipients' food benefits for purchasing fruits and vegetables. In Spokane County, a \$10 EBT purchase of fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables results in a \$5 off produce coupon at participating Safeways. At participating Farmers Markets, purchases made with EBT/SNAP dollars are matched dollar for dollar when purchasing fruits and vegetables. Continuing to fund these programs helps stretch families' food budget to buy more fruits and vegetables and support our local farmers.

Strategies	Recommendations	Potential Partners
Create opportunities for people to grow and share their own food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote existing educational programs for gardening, cooking, and food preservation. Increase land availability for community gardens. Support sustainable food systems and urban agriculture education. 	WSU Extension, Catholic Charities Food for All, Spokane Edible Tree Project, Growing Neighbors, Community Centers, Spokane County, City of Spokane, City of Spokane Valley, City of Millwood, City of Cheney, City of Airway Heights, City of Medical Lake, City of Deer Park, City of Newport, City of Liberty Lake, Neighboring Communities, Spokane Community Gardens, Inland Northwest Community Gardens, Inland Northwest Permaculture Guild, Spokane Permaculture, NAACP, Local Farmers, Mutual Aid Groups (Mutual Aid PNW, Spokane County Mutual Aid, BIPOC Mutual Aid Spokane), Little Food Pantries, Housing Organizations and Shelters
Support and grow equitable food access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and reduce barriers to access food aid. Promote expansion of food distribution routes to low resource areas. Assess service capacity needs of food pantries and identify opportunities for shared resources (e.g., cold storage, shared kitchen space). Research equity issues in the food system (e.g., availability of culturally relevant food). 	Second Harvest, Northwest Harvest, Catholic Charities Food for All, WSU Extension, Spokane Regional Health District, Spokane County Food Security Coalition, Inland Northwest Farmers Market Association, WA DSHS Market Match Program, WA Farm to School Network, 211, People for People, Eastern Washington, Feed Spokane, Food Not Bombs, Homeless Coalition, Local Food Pantries and Food Assistance Programs, Local Businesses Retailers, Native Health, Community Registered Dietitians, Community Health Workers
Connect local food system stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create local food directory. Create resources section for SFPC website. Networking/social opportunities to bring food system stakeholders together. 	Spokane Regional Health District Second Harvest and Food Bank Network, WSU, Spokane County, City of Spokane, City of Spokane Valley, City of Millwood, City of Cheney, City of Airway Heights, City of Medical Lake, City of Deer Park, City of Newport, City of Liberty Lake, Spokane Independent Metro Business Alliance (SIMBA), Spokane Cohousing, Spokane Conservation District, Tilth Alliance, MealConnect, Food Security Coalition
Support programs and policies that help children, adults and seniors get healthy food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase enrollment of eligible people into SNAP, WIC, school meals and other government nutrition programs. Advocate for public and private food assistance programs. 	WSDA / USDA, ALTCEW, City of Spokane, City of Spokane Valley, City of Millwood, City of Cheney, City of Airway Heights, City of Medical Lake, City of Deer Park, City of Newport, City of Liberty Lake, Spokane County, State of Washington, Catholic Charities Food for All, DSHS Basic Food Subcontractors, Public Schools, Spokane Regional Health District, People For People

REDUCE FOOD WASTE

There are many reasons for the increase in waste output: changing patterns of consumption; the variety, quality, and durability of consumer products; increased packaging; and Americans' attitudes and habits about thrift and conservation.

Food waste is a major health, environmental, and economic problem. Approximately, 40% of food in the United States goes uneaten, ending up in landfills or incinerators where it contributes to greenhouse gases and negative impacts to the environment and people's health.

A sustainable food system is regenerative rather than extractive in nature. It allows natural ecosystems and human cultures and communities to thrive. It helps us achieve carbon neutrality while acknowledging and addressing environmental injustices.

The Spokane Food Policy Council defined its Regional Food Action Plan Priorities as the following:



Reform the residential and business composting program.

Advocate for year-round green bin collection service.

In Spokane County, the green bin collection only occurs for 9 months, March-November. Increasing to 12 months would allow residents to compost year around. Also, these services are not available throughout all of Spokane County so in rural areas people do not have access to green bins.

Advocate for free/low-cost green bin service to every single-family residence.

In Spokane, there is a cost associated with the green bin service at \$122.58 per year, which may not be affordable for all families. By reducing the costs and/or making this service free, more families will have access to composting.

Examine ways to incentivize green bin service for commercial accounts like businesses and multi-family complexes.

In Spokane, green bins are not available to multi-family complexes or at businesses.

Identify opportunities for shared drop off locations for organic materials.

The current system for collecting compost and other food scraps is not accessible to all individuals living in Spokane County. Waste reduction advocates can meet with members of the Spokane Food Policy Council, Spokane Food Security Coalition or the Spokane County Regional Solid Waste System (SCRSWS) to identify and develop connections between those without access to on-site compost and those that have the capacity to take the compost.

Use education to reduce edible food waste while increasing the repurposing or composting inedible food and other organics.

Advocate for programs to educate individuals, businesses, and institutions on how to reduce food waste and/or compost to limit the amount of edible food put into the waste management system.

The City of Spokane has a new online waste reduction class for children created by Kristine Major, the Solid Waste Education Coordinator.

Develop outreach and a social marketing campaign regarding food waste.



Public awareness campaigns can help raise community awareness on the why and how to minimize food waste. Love Food Stop Waste, which was launched by Seattle Public Utilities, could be adapted for Spokane County. Currently, the city of Spokane's food waste campaign aims to bring light to the issue of food waste and empower individuals to take action by suggesting simple ways to reduce food waste on a personal level.

Increase the number of strategically placed recyclable/compostable bins in Spokane and include signage about what's recyclable/compostable to the top of pick-up bins. During large community events, such as Bloomsday or Hoopfest, coordination with youth organizations to have volunteers educate the public on how to sort their trash. Work with school districts, hospitals, grocery stores, and restaurants to implement waste reduction programs and to partner with a company like Sunshine Disposal to convert food waste into compost.

Recognize and certify green business practices.

Work with city and county officials to promote local legislation to incentivize schools, hospitals, and restaurants to purchase either fully reusable or compostable packaging. Identify certification programs for businesses that have green practices. Consider programs like TRUE to be recognized for zero waste certification. In Spokane, the Envirocertified program certifies businesses that put practices and policies in place to properly manage hazardous wastes and conserve resources.

Incentivize food businesses and farmers to donate surplus food.

Educate producers on current regulations regarding food donations.

Information can be found at the Washington Department of Health Charity Food Donations webpage.

Educate producers about where they can donate their surplus.

Spokane Edible Tree Project, a program that works with landowners and residents with fruit trees to help harvest unpicked fruit and distribute it to programs that serve families in need.



Advocate with businesses on how they can avoid disposal costs.

The Spokane County Regional Solid Waste System (SCRSWS) provides waste consultations to businesses, schools, and hospitals

Increase funding for programs like farm to food pantry.

This is an innovative way to bring nutritious food to people struggling to put food on the table while also promoting the economic growth and viability of Washington farmers. The Farm to Food Pantry initiative, a partnership with Harvest Against Hunger, helps bridge the gap between hunger relief organizations and farmers through relationship building.

Integrate food waste pickup so it's part of the back-haul of food delivery systems.

The City of Spokane has a new initiative from Growing Neighbors that uses manual and electric bicycles to deliver fresh, local food to people in need while collecting compostable food waste.

Identify funding for equipment to maintain a cold chain when donating food.

Most food rescue organizations do not have the funds to purchase refrigerated trucks. Working with larger food banks in the area to secure grants for purchasing refrigerated trucks could double daily food deliveries.



Strategies	Recommendations	Potential Partners
Reform the residential and business composting program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for year-round green bin collection service • Advocate for free/low-cost green bin service to every single-family residence • Examine ways to incentivize green bin service for commercial accounts like businesses and multi-family complexes • Identify opportunities for shared drop off locations for organic materials 	Spokane Solid Waste Department, City of Spokane, Sunshine Disposal, Waste Management, Spokane's Sustainable Action Subcommittee on Waste Reduction, Department of Ecology, US Compost Council
Use education to reduce edible food waste while increasing the repurposing or composting of inedible food and other organics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for programs to educate individuals, businesses, and institutions on how to reduce food waste and/or compost to limit the amount of edible food put into the waste management system. • Outreach and social marketing campaign regarding food waste • Increase the number of strategically placed recyclable/compostable bins in Spokane and include signage about what's recyclable/compostable to the top of pick-up bins • Recognize and certify green business practices. 	Spokane Solid Waste Dept, Nutrition Education Programs, Department of Ecology, Spokane Regional Health District, Food for All programs
Incentivize food businesses and farmers to donate unsold but still good food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate producers on current regulations regarding food donations. • Educate producers about where they can donate their surplus. • Advocate with businesses on how they can avoid disposal costs. • Increase funding for programs like farm to food pantry. • Integrate food waste pickup so it's part of the back-haul of food delivery systems. • Identify funding for equipment to maintain a cold chain when donating food. 	City of Spokane, WSDA, Spokane Edible Tree Project, Feed Spokane, Food pantries, Harvest Against Hunger, Department of Ecology

APPENDIX

How This Plan Was Developed

In 2016, The Spokane Food Policy Council published the Spokane Regional Food System Inventory. This report, written by members of the Spokane Food Policy Council (SFPC), is a broad assessment of the Spokane regional food system in 2016--the first of its kind for Spokane. It evaluates our local food systems to improve access and quality of food for their residents and to determine their ability to provide food during economic, environmental, and climatic challenges.

The City of Spokane formally adopted the Spokane Regional Food System Inventory in 2017 and requested the Spokane Food Policy Council develop an adoptable food action plan for Spokane that addresses the following: 1. Local food economy opportunities throughout the entire food system; 2. Ways to increase Spokane resident access to healthy food; 3. Strategies to preserve our natural landscape, reduce food waste, and prepare for the impacts of climate change. Based upon this request, the Spokane Food Policy Council took the first steps to create a Regional Food Action Plan.



This plan was developed with support of the Spokane Regional Health District. The recommendations outlined in the Spokane Regional Food Action Plan are solely those of the Spokane Food Policy Council.

The Regional Food Action Plan priorities were determined through the following process:

1. **Food Policy Audit (Spring 2020)** - The Spokane Food Policy Council worked with the Gonzaga Law Clinic to conduct a Food Policy Audit which highlights current food policies and areas where we currently do not have local food policies in place.
2. **Food System Community Survey (Summer 2020)** - An online community survey was conducted inviting all local food system stakeholders to offer insight into local food system priorities. It was widely distributed throughout the community via email, Facebook and through local partners.
3. **Community Forums (Fall 2020)** - To gain a deeper knowledge of the current food system challenges, the Spokane Food Policy Council held two focused community forums seeking community input on food system priorities and potential solutions.
4. **State and Local Government Entities and Community Partner Review (Fall/Winter 2021)** – The draft Spokane Regional Food Action Plan was circulated to various state and local government entities and community partners for review and feedback.

APPENDIX

Research Agenda

Additional research is needed in some areas to help us more fully understand where the best opportunities to improve the local food system exist and how to address challenges. The Spokane Food Policy Council will seek partnerships to explore the following high-priority research areas more in depth.

- Collaborate with local indigenous populations to understand priorities including local fish food system, fish hatcheries and dams to bring back the local salmon population.
- Measure accessibility of healthy food in neighborhoods and communities.
- Engage communities most at risk for diet-related diseases, and immigrant and refugee communities, to identify strategies to improve their access to healthy, culturally appropriate food.
- Develop site criteria and conduct a further inventory of City-owned land available for urban agriculture.
- Assess the food production potential of publicly and privately owned land.
- Assess the opportunities and challenges of businesses that grow and process local and healthy foods.
- Explore the need for local and regional food processing facilities, cold storage, and other food-related infrastructure.

APPENDIX

Goals Summary

Goals	Strategies	Recommendations	Potential Partners
Farmland Preservation	Create visibility for local farms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate a campaign for City- and County-funded local food production support and promotion. Put together a promotion package for the local food and farm economy. Complete an economic study of positive impact of the local food production sector. 	Washington State University (WSU) economists, Spokane Community Indicators, SpokaneTrends.org, Spokane County Information Systems Department, Spokane County Communications Office, VisitSpokane.com, GSI Inc, SRHD, Spokane Board of Health, Teri Stripes, <i>Economic Development Specialist</i> , City of Spokane, Local media outlets, Live Local INW, Spokane Independent Metro Business Alliance (SIMBA)
	Create a framework for updating local Comprehensive Plans to strengthen farmland preservation policies and revitalize the local food system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene a working group to create framework. Identify working group stakeholders and representatives from the jurisdictions. Work in coordination with the City of Spokane Sustainability Action Sub Committee. 	Cities of Spokane County, City of Spokane Sustainability Action Subcommittee, Spokane Conservation District, Spokane Farmland Preservation Working Group, American Farmland Trust, WSU Extension
	Improve access to farmland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the establishment of a state funded farm-link program with referral and support services to facilitate the transfer of farms to farmers and take advantage of available federal programs. Increase funding for purchasing agricultural conservation easements. Create a County-level farmland preservation program. Influence Spokane Conservation Futures to encourage more nominations of working farmland into its acquisition portfolio. 	Washington Farmland Trust's Farm to Farmer program, Washington State Office of Farmland Preservation, Washington State Food Policy Forum, American Farmland Trust, State legislators, Cara McNab, USDA, WA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator, Washington Farmland Trust, Spokane County, Agrarian Trust

Goals	Strategies	Recommendations	Potential Partners
Farmland Preservation	Increase farm labor availability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate farmers on farm labor options and business structures. Make a permanent internship program that is accessible to farmers and meets their needs. Educate farmers about the Farm Internship Pilot Program available through the Washington Department of Labor and Industries. Assist farmers in developing their required educational curricula. 	Washington Department of Labor and Industries, Northwest Cooperative Development Center, Small Business Administration, State Legislators
	Increase availability and convenience of local meat and meat processing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support state funding of agricultural programs designed to build small and mid-scale and regional meat producer capacity. Take steps to facilitate shared meat animal ownership so that consumers can more conveniently purchase meat processed by state licensed Custom meat processors. Form a stakeholder group of meat producers and processors to explore options for improving regional access to meat processing facilities and/or building up regional meat processing capacity 	Beefing Up the Palouse, WSU WA Meat Up Production Program, WSDA Regional Markets Program, WSDA Food Safety Program, Local 'custom' meat processors, The Farm Bureau, Past members of the C P o W Livestock Processors, Cooperative Association formerly of Odessa, WA, Weston A. Price Foundation, Farm to Consumer Legal Defense Fund, Heritage Foundation
Increase Local Food Processing	Improve value of a Cottage Food legislation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand list of foods permitted by existing Cottage Food Law to include refrigerated items, acidified low acid products. Remove recipe restrictions for jams, jellies, and preserves. Raise the income cap under Cottage Food law to \$25,000 per year. Extend the term of a Cottage Food license to two years. Expand allowable sales venues to include wholesale and internet sales. Enact Food Sovereignty legislation modeled after laws in more progressive states. 	SRHD, WSDA Regional Markets Program, WSDA Food Safety Program, Institute for Justice, Cottage Food Licensees

Goals	Strategies	Recommendations	Potential Partners
Healthy Food for All	Create opportunities for people to grow and share their own food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote existing educational programs for gardening, cooking, and food preservation. Increase land availability for community gardens. Support sustainable food systems and urban agriculture education. 	WSU Extension, Catholic Charities Food for All, Spokane Edible Tree Project, Growing Neighbors, Community Centers, Spokane County, City of Spokane, City of Spokane Valley, City of Millwood, City of Cheney, City of Airway Heights, City of Medical Lake, City of Deer Park, City of Newport, City of Liberty Lake, Neighboring Communities, Spokane Community Gardens, Inland Northwest Community Gardens, Inland Northwest Permaculture Guild, Spokane Permaculture, NAACP, Local Farmers, Mutual Aid Groups (Mutual Aid PNW, Spokane County Mutual Aid, BIPOC Mutual Aid Spokane), Little Food Pantries, Housing Organizations and Shelters
	Support and grow equitable food access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and reduce barriers to access food aid. Promote expansion of food distribution routes to low resource areas. Assess service capacity needs of food pantries and identify opportunities for shared resources (e.g., cold storage, shared kitchen space). Research equity issues in the food system (e.g., availability of culturally relevant food). 	Second Harvest, Northwest Harvest, Catholic Charities Food for All, WSU Extension, Spokane Regional Health District, Spokane County Food Security Coalition, Inland Northwest Farmers Market Association, WA DSHS Market Match Program, WA Farm to School Network, 211, People for People, Eastern Washington, Feed Spokane, Food Not Bombs, Homeless Coalition, Local Food Pantries and Food Assistance Programs, Local Businesses Retailers, Native Health, Community Registered Dietitians, Community Health Workers
	Connect local food system stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create local food directory. Create resources section for SFPC website. Networking/social opportunities to bring food system stakeholders together. 	Spokane Regional Health District Second Harvest and Food Bank Network, WSU, Spokane County, City of Spokane, City of Spokane Valley, City of Millwood, City of Cheney, City of Airway Heights, City of Medical Lake, City of Deer Park, City of Newport, City of Liberty Lake, Spokane Independent Metro Business Alliance (SIMBA), Spokane Cohousing, Spokane Conservation District, Tilth Alliance, MealConnect, Food Security Coalition

Goals	Strategies	Recommendations	Potential Partners
Healthy Food for All	Support programs and policies that help children, adults and seniors get healthy food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase enrollment of eligible people into SNAP, WIC, school meals and other government nutrition programs. • Advocate for public and private food assistance programs. 	WSDA / USDA, ALTCEW, City of Spokane, City of Spokane Valley, City of Millwood, City of Cheney, City of Airway Heights, City of Medical Lake, City of Deer Park, City of Newport, City of Liberty Lake, Spokane County, State of Washington, Catholic Charities Food for All, DSHS Basic Food Subcontractors, Public Schools, Spokane Regional Health District, People For People
	Reform the residential and business composting program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for year-round green bin collection service • Advocate for free/low-cost green bin service to every single-family residence • Examine ways to incentivize green bin service for commercial accounts like businesses and multi-family complexes • Identify opportunities for shared drop off locations for organic materials 	Spokane Solid Waste Department, City of Spokane, Sunshine Disposal, Waste Management, Spokane's Sustainable Action Subcommittee on Waste Reduction, Department of Ecology, US Compost Council
Reduce Food Waste	Use education to reduce edible food waste while increasing the repurposing or composting of inedible food and other organics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for programs to educate individuals, businesses, and institutions on how to reduce food waste and/or compost to limit the amount of edible food put into the waste management system. • Outreach and social marketing campaign regarding food waste • Increase the number of strategically placed recyclable/compostable bins in Spokane and include signage about what's recyclable/compostable to the top of pick-up bins • Recognize and certify green business practices. 	Spokane Solid Waste Dept, Nutrition Education Programs, Department of Ecology, Spokane Regional Health District, Food for All programs
	Incentivize food businesses and farmers to donate unsold but still good food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate producers on current regulations regarding food donations. • Educate producers about where they can donate their surplus. • Advocate with businesses on how they can avoid disposal costs. • Increase funding for programs like farm to food pantry. • Integrate food waste pickup so it's part of the back-haul of food delivery systems. • Identify funding for equipment to maintain a cold chain when donating food. 	City of Spokane, WSDA, Spokane Edible Tree Project, Feed Spokane, Food pantries, Harvest Against Hunger, Department of Ecology

APPENDIX

Spokane Food Policy Council

The Spokane Food Policy Council is comprised of food system stakeholders with diverse experience and includes representation from Spokane Regional Health District, Second Harvest, Catholic Charities, WSU Extension, SNAP-Ed, farmers, ranchers, regenerative agriculturists, academia, local business owners and food service representatives. Our mission is to advance policies and initiatives that foster a resilient food system in the Spokane area; one that is healthy and equitable for its residents, economy and environment.

Spokane Food Policy Council Members

- ▶ **Elizabeth Abbey*** – PhD, RN
- ▶ **Shawna Beese** – RN, PhD Candidate
- ▶ **Julie Bongard*** – Spokane Regional Health District
- ▶ **Ian Cunningham** – Community Stakeholder
- ▶ **Kendra Dean** – Catholic Charities Eastern Washington
- ▶ **Shaneese Dunigan** – Courage to Grow Farms
- ▶ **Gregg Deponte** – Ole Aina Farms, Northeast Washington Soil Health Stewards
- ▶ **Torie Foote*** – Footehills Farm
- ▶ **Josh Hechtman*** – Repurpose 81
- ▶ **Kathy Hedgcock** – Second Harvest
- ▶ **Nils Johnson** – Rural Resources
- ▶ **Julianne Kellogg** – Crop Scientist in Human Nutrition
- ▶ **Kitty Klitzke** – formerly Futurewise
- ▶ **Pat Munts*** – WSU Spokane County Extension
- ▶ **Andrey Muzychenko*** – Community Stakeholder
- ▶ **Chrys Ostrander** – Permaculture Designer
- ▶ **Kylie Pybus** – WSU Spokane County Extension
- ▶ **Jennifer Stutchell** – Pantry Fuel, LLC
- ▶ **Natalie Tauzin** – Spokane Regional Health District
- ▶ **Kyle Unland*** – formerly Spokane Regional Health District
- ▶ **Lori Van Anrooy** – WSU Spokane County Extension
- ▶ **Stephanie Watson** – River City Youth Ops
- ▶ **Melodi Wynne*** – Spokane Tribal Network
- ▶ **Janell Harvey** – Spokane Food Policy Council Program Director, MBA

**Past Spokane Food Policy Council Member*

APPENDIX

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the Spokane Regional Health District for their support and to all the community stakeholders and food system partners who participated in the development of the Spokane Regional Food Action Plan.

Thank you to Kendra Dean, Kathy Hedgcock, Nils Johnson, Julianne Kellogg, and Chrys Ostrander for photograph contributions.



P.O. Box 1785 Spokane, WA 99210

www.spokanefoodpolicy.org

Whatcom County **FOOD SYSTEM PLAN**

A 10 year plan for an equitable
and sustainable food system



Prepared by the Whatcom County Food System Committee with support from New Venture Advisors
March 2023

Foreword



Life in Whatcom County has revolved around food since the first Lummi fishing net dipped into the water. It is a commitment we made as a community from the first day Ben and Dorothy Haggen opened their grocery store in

1933, or Hemplers wrapped their first sausage, or Ed and Aileen Bransma milked their first pail of Edaleens milk. It is a belief churned into the soil of our raspberry fields, and served fresh in our restaurants each night. From farmer to factory and from shelf to spoon, the heartbeat of our county rises and falls with our food system and has since time immemorial.

But as we move forward into this new era, there are mighty forces that threaten to destabilize our food system. Devastating market swings impact our local farmers, harsh weather events – made even more dangerous by the growing impacts of climate change – destroy our crops and disrupt our supply chains. Stagnant wages and rising food costs make putting groceries in the refrigerator more difficult each year. Battles over natural resources, invasive species, land and water rights, and threats of economic recession challenge the very foundation of the food system upon which we rely.

If we are to survive and thrive during these challenging times, we need a County government

that shares that commitment to supporting our local food system. For too long, policy relating to food was handled in silos – blockaded into sectors by habit, bureaucracy, or neglect. If we as a community wanted to make our food system more resilient, we needed to take a much broader approach.

In short, we needed a plan. Built by locals, for locals.

This document is not filled with plug-and-play policies from other places. It is the result of hundreds of conversations with the people in our community. You cannot solve a problem without talking to the boots-on-the-ground and this ten-year plan is filled with goals and action items from farm workers, buyers for grocery stores, food bank volunteers, nutritionists, fishermen, natural resource specialists and hundreds of others working each day with their hands and hearts to improve our food system.

This plan is a roadmap to a future where Whatcom County's commitment extends from seed to table. A future where our food system

is prosperous, equitable, resilient and once again, a core part of the Whatcom County experience.

Thank you for participating in making that future a reality. As every farmer knows, the best way to ensure a better tomorrow is to plant a good seed today.

“For too long, policy relating to food was handled in silos – blockaded into sectors by habit, bureaucracy, or neglect. If we as a community wanted to make our food system more resilient, we needed to take a much broader approach.”

- Riley Sweeney, Food System Committee Chair

Acknowledgments

First and Foremost we must acknowledge that what settlers call Whatcom County is the ancestral homelands of the Coast Salish Peoples, who have lived in the Salish Sea Basin, throughout the San Juan Islands and the North Cascade Watershed, from time immemorial. We, the Whatcom County Food System Committee, as well as all residents in Whatcom County, extend our deepest respect and gratitude for our indigenous neighbors, the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe, for their enduring care and protection of our shared lands and waterways.

Over five years ago, the Whatcom Food Network and other food system leaders envisioned the development of a Food System Plan to provide guidance and strategy to the region's food system. This document is the fruition of that vision.

Who is New Venture Advisors LLC (NVA)?

NVA was hired to support the food system planning process. NVA is a strategy consulting firm specializing in food system planning and food enterprise development. The team is committed to environmental sustainability, social impact, equity, diversity, and inclusion as we help our clients realize their vision for a more just and sustainable food system.

Over the last decade NVA has helped more than 150 clients develop food systems through strategic investments and creative planning and programming.

Special thanks to the people and organizations who made this plan possible:

- Members of the Whatcom County Food System Committee past and present: Adrienne Renz, Amber Noskoff, Andy Enfield, Jon Maberry, Kendall Whitney, Krista Rome, Mardi Solomon, Margaret Gerard, Maureen Darras, Nikki Olsen, Noelle Beecroft, Paul Burrill, Rhys-Thorvald Hansen, Riley Starks, Riley Sweeney, Rob Dhaliwal, Sean Hopps, Trevor Gearhart, and Ali Jensen, staff.
- The Whatcom Food Network staff and Steering Committee.
- Whatcom Community Foundation.
- Whatcom County Health and Community Services.
- Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu.
- Whatcom County Council Members: Barry Buchanan, Ben Elenbaas, Carol Frazey, Kathy Kershner, Kaylee Galloway, Todd Donovan, and Tyler Byrd.
- Eileen Horn and Caroline Myran with New Venture Advisors.
- The hundreds of community members who participated in the surveys, community events, and public comments.

Table of Contents

Foreword...1

Acknowledgments...2

Who is the Whatcom County Food System Committee?...4

What is the food system?...5

What is a food system plan?...6

Why do we need a food system plan?...7

Geography of Whatcom...8

How was this plan created?...9

Community Engagement...10

How to read this plan...13



Goal 1: Cultivate equity and justice in our food system...14

▪ *Goal 1: Objectives & Actions...16*

Goal 2: Protect and regenerate our soil, water, and land...18

▪ *Goal 2: Objectives & Actions...20*

Goal 3: Build a resilient and vibrant local food economy...25

▪ *Goal 3: Objectives & Actions...27*

Goal 4: Ensure access to healthy food for all...30

▪ *Goal 4: Objectives & Actions...32*

Goal 5: Mitigate emissions from food system activities and adapt the food system to a changing climate...35

▪ *Goal 5: Objectives & Actions...38*

How will this plan be implemented?...42

Endnotes...44



Who is the Whatcom County Food System Committee?

Community members in Whatcom County began discussing our county's food system as early as 2007, when the Washington State University Extension Office in Whatcom County developed the first community food assessment (CFA).

Subsequent CFAs, conducted by the Whatcom Food Network (WFN), identified the desire for a countywide food system plan. In 2018, the WFN created a food system planning task force, which determined a Whatcom County Council advisory committee would be an appropriate channel for food system planning. The task force, with support from the Public Health Advisory Board, drafted an ordinance to create the food system committee (FSC).

The FSC ordinance called for the committee to draft, implement, provide oversight for, and regularly update a countywide food system plan to strengthen our local and regional food system. The FSC is made up of nine positions, representing different sectors in the food system.

The committee held their first meeting in February 2019. Their first task was updating the CFA. Committee members interviewed 58 subject matter experts to develop the Whatcom Community Food Assessment 2021 Update Report. [View the most recent CFA from 2021 at this link.](#) This assessment laid the groundwork for this county food system plan.

In early 2022, the county council allocated funds to the hiring of a consultant, New Venture Advisors (NVA), to assist the FSC in the development of a food system plan.

Membership

Many people have been involved in the FSC over the years. The current membership and the sectors represented are:

- Local sales/farming
- Food access
- Nutrition/public health
- Natural resources
- Whatcom Food Network
- Labor issues
- Processing/distribution
- Fishing industry
- Export sales farming

The FSC hosts a website with meeting agendas, minutes, and relevant documents at www.whatcomcounty.us/2992/Food-System-Committee.



What is the food system?

The food system is a web of interconnected inputs that moves food from seed to sandwich. It includes waterways and land, fishers, farmers, distributors, manufacturers and processors, retailers, and individual consumers. It also includes the waste streams that are generated from all of these steps along the way, including both food and packaging waste.

The food system is influenced by our policies, our culture, and our values. It intersects with many other Whatcom County priorities, including the importance of advancing equity in our food system and adapting our food system to a changing climate.

Food systems don't have set boundaries, due to the globalized interconnectedness of food production and the influence of state and local policies on the food system. For this purpose of this plan, though, we are focused on recommendations for the local food system of Whatcom County, Washington.



Photo: Margaret Gerard

What is a food system plan?

A food system plan is a long-range planning document that is driven by community input and strategic goals. It is defined by the American Planning Association as “a set of interconnected, forward-thinking activities that strengthen a community and regional food system through the creation and implementation of plans and policies.” It includes a baseline assessment of how we grow, distribute, consume, and dispose of food and identifies concrete actions to improve the policies, programs, and investments that shape how food moves throughout our community.

The Whatcom County Food System Plan sets a 10-year vision for the county's food system.

The main audience for this plan is the local government of Whatcom County. Therefore, the objectives and actions in the plan are the areas where local government can have the most impact.



Photo: Margaret Gerard



Photo: Cat Sieh



Photo: Trevor Gearhart

Why do we need a food system plan?

A food system plan is modeled after other county strategic plans, like those for land use, economic development, or recreation. However, unlike a department of parks and recreation, there is no county-level “department of food” tasked with stewarding these efforts. Local governments are uniquely positioned to lead food system planning because the food system overlaps with many of the structural and systemic issues that require attention in other areas of a community—for example, land use, water use, transportation, infrastructure, food access, and equity.

Groups across the country, like the Whatcom County Food System Committee, are leading robust community-driven planning efforts to capture the aspirations and needs of their residents to formulate a long-range vision for their food system. Cities and counties across the country are bringing a community planning lens to the food system to create focus and intention in its development and sustainability.

It has never been more urgent for Whatcom County to strategically plan for its food system. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the vulnerabilities in our food supply chain and

inequitable social systems both within our county and throughout the United States. Severe weather events driven by climate change like flooding, drought, and fires are impacting our ability to grow and harvest food. Farmworkers, farmers, and fishers are subjected to more unhealthy air and higher working temperatures. People in our community, including food system workers, are struggling to afford food. Food banks in Whatcom County saw a 17 percent increase in utilization in 2022. The number of farms in operation is remaining steady; however, only two percent of our farms are organic and most of the food we produce is sold outside of Whatcom County. We produce more waste in our food system than ever before. Organic waste is a significant contributor of greenhouse gas emissions in our county.

COVID-19 and increased occurrences of disruptive climate events have underlined the dire need to create a more resilient, equitable, and just food system in our county. While a food system plan can’t eradicate hunger overnight, it provides strategic steps to reach food system goals for our county.



Photos from the November 2021 floods in Whatcom County.

Geography of Whatcom

Whatcom County is on the land of the Lhaq'temish (Lummi), Nuxwsa'7aq (Nooksack), Coast Salish, Nleʔkepmx Tmíxw (Nlaka'pamux), Nuwhaha, Sauk Suiattle, Semiahmoo, and Stillaguamish tribes and people past and presentⁱ.

Whatcom County has 130 miles of coastlines and over 100,000 acres of active farmland.

Whatcom County borders Canada to the north, Skagit County to the south, Okanogan County to the east, and the Salish Sea to the west. Whatcom County is in the Nooksack River Watershed, which includes the Nooksack River, Sumas River, Lake Whatcom, Lake Samish, Birch Bay, Semiahmoo Bay, Lummi Bay, Samish Bay, and Bellingham Bay. Other important geographic features include Mt Baker, 130 miles of coastlines, and over 100,000 acres of active farmlandⁱⁱ.

Whatcom County has seven incorporated cities (Bellingham, Blaine, Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, Nooksack, and Sumas) and several unincorporated communities with substantial populations, such as Columbia Valley, Point Roberts, Birch Bay, Acme, Van Zandt, South Fork Valley, Deming, Maple Falls, Kendall, and Nugents Corner.



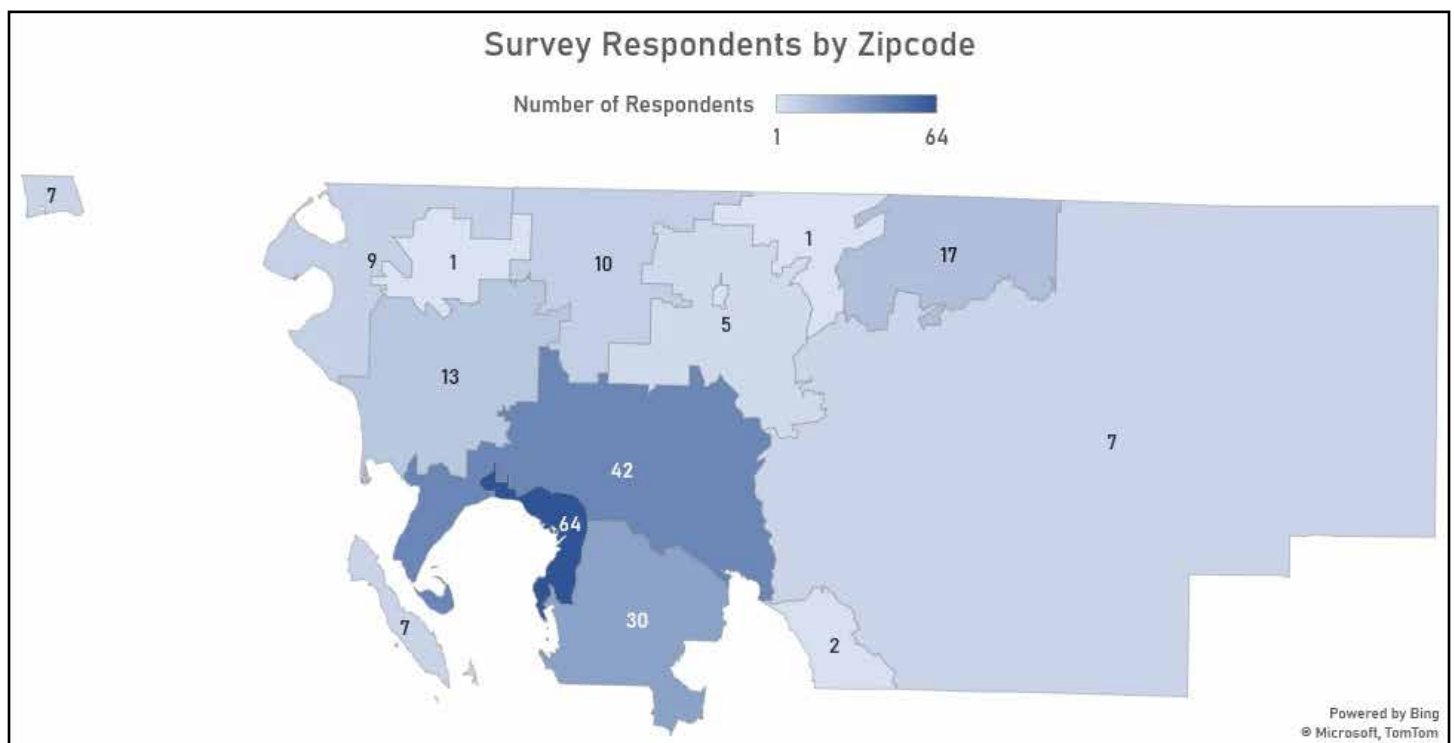
Aerial photo of Whatcom County, WA.

How was this plan created?

The FSC began the development of the food system plan in 2019. The first step was to update the Community Food Assessment (CFA), which identified key challenges and opportunities across all food system sectors—land, water, labor, farming, fishing, processing and distribution, consumption, and waste. The CFA laid a strong foundation for the creation of a countywide food system plan.

NVA, consultants specializing in food system planning and sustainable food business development, were hired to assist the committee in early 2022.

The overarching goals of the plan were developed utilizing the key findings of the 2021 CFA. These goals were drafted and then shared with the community through a public survey to generate input on the goals. Responses were used to create a list of actions that would be necessary to achieve those goals. The survey, open from April through June of 2022 and available in multiple languages, received 227 responses from community members.



Map of food system survey respondents by ZIP Code.

Community Engagement



Community engagement events held throughout the county in the summer of 2022.

From May through August of 2022, the FSC and partners, such as the Whatcom Food Network, hosted more than 10 community events to discuss the draft goals and to receive additional input on potential actions. These community events included small group discussions with farmers and restaurant workers, community-wide conversations about equity and justice in the food system, and focused outreach in neighborhoods,

at farmers markets, and at community events. Hundreds of residents participated in these discussions and shared critical insights about their lived experiences in the food system and their ideas for how the county could improve.

All community input was compiled and analyzed for themes to identify key challenges and opportunities in the Whatcom County food system.

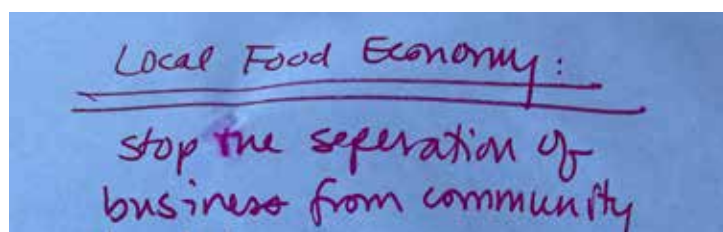
Community Engagement



Top and right, Shuksan Middle School community gathering on July 24, 2022.

Additionally, specific objectives and actions recommended in the CFA and other related county plans were included. These data sets were synthesized to create objectives for each food plan goal, along with specific actions to help meet each objective. This process yielded a large set of objectives and actions for the FSC to consider.

Throughout the fall and winter of 2022, FSC members divided into subcommittees, one for each goal area. They met multiple times to refine the objectives and actions from the community feedback. To validate potential draft objectives and actions, the committee members presented them to subject matter experts in the county and county staff who would be tasked with carrying out the actions. There were 11 total subcommittee meetings in the fall of 2022.

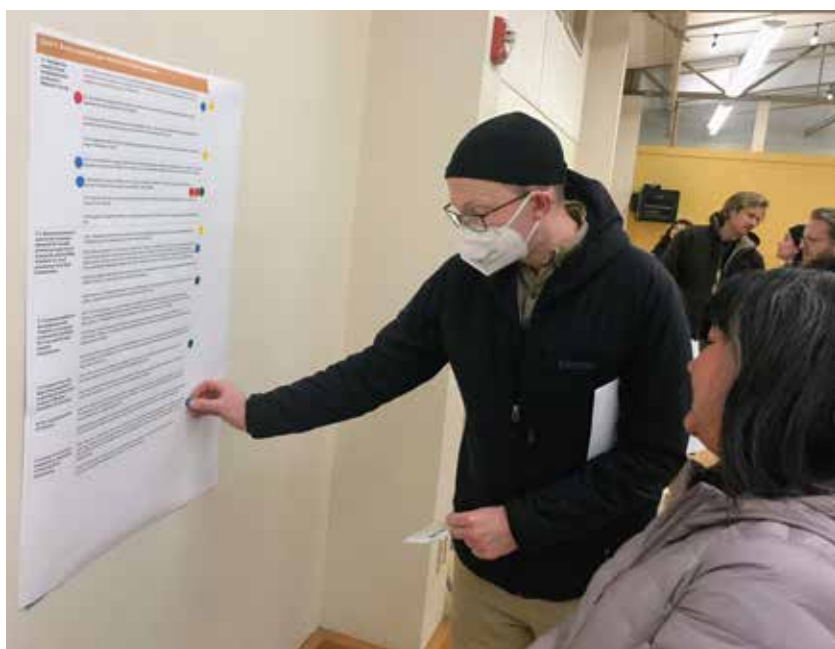
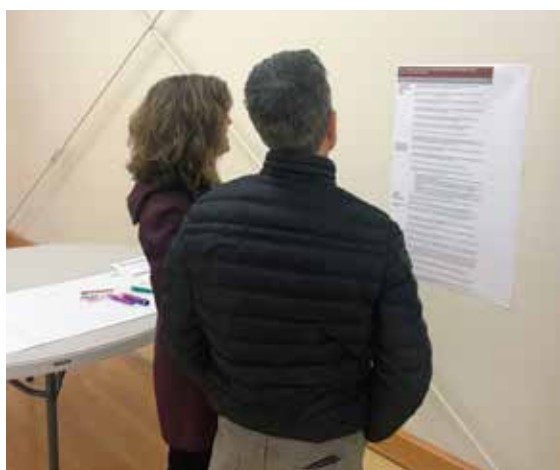


Community Engagement

The first draft of the plan that resulted was approved by the committee on December 15, 2022.

The plan was further refined in January and February of 2023 through a community feedback

form and additional community engagement including an open house event to share the draft plan. Input from these final events was utilized to refine the first draft and to create the final Whatcom County Food System Plan that follows.



Top and left, Ferndale Pioneer Pavilion community gathering on Feb. 13, 2023.

How to read this plan

The Whatcom County Food System Plan was designed to enhance community collaboration and to guide and foster a vibrant local food system in Whatcom County. The timeline for the plan is 10 years, recognizing that some actions may be able to be implemented immediately, while others will take additional development.

The actions are focused on Whatcom County government and represent the areas of the food system where local government policies can have the greatest impact. It will take the efforts of the elected officials and staff in Whatcom County, along with many community partners to see the plan through.

The plan is organized from broad goals to specific actions:

- **Goals** state the desired outcomes and future vision for Whatcom County's food system.
- **Objectives** are more specific, measurable strategies to guide local work to reach each goal. Each goal has multiple objectives that support it.
- **Actions** are the specific policies, programs, and initiatives to meet the objectives.

Actions are organized into five key categories



Policy Solutions:

These are policies (ordinances, resolutions, taxes, economic development incentive, etc.) that the County could enact to strengthen the food system.



Community Collaborations:

These are the potential innovative partnerships between community food system partners to advocate for the local food system.



County Leadership:

These are opportunities for Whatcom County to lead by example within their own operations and internal policies.



Infrastructure:

These are investments in the physical assets of the local food system in the region, which includes the facilities and transportation networks needed to move food from farm to fork.



Education and Programming:

These are the community education programs about the food system that build awareness and knowledge amongst residents. Food system programs provide a variety of services to County residents - from cooking classes to composting initiatives.

Goal 1: Cultivate equity and justice in our food system

In the United States and the Whatcom County food system, your race, ethnicity, gender, income, and zip code can dictate your access to healthy food, your ability to own farm land, and your access to capital to start your own food business.

The COVID-19 pandemic put additional stress on systems that we already knew were broken (including food systems), further exposing and increasing health disparities and heightening awareness of racial inequities and injustices for many in our community.ⁱⁱⁱ

Some of the current inequities in the Whatcom County food system include:

- In Whatcom County, access to healthy foods varies based on geography, income, and race or ethnicity. Health outcomes are poorest among youth who are English language learners and for youth and adults who are low-income and/or people of color.^{iv}
- Approximately 75% of farmworkers in the United States are Latinx migrants. Many of these farm workers receive low wages, have few labor protections, and face threats to their health from pesticide use, physically demanding conditions, and an ever-warming climate.^v
- Approximately 9% of Whatcom County residents identify as Hispanic/Latinx, yet in 2020, 25% of Whatcom County COVID-19 cases were among Hispanic/Latinx residents.^{vi}
- In 2012, 44% of farmworkers in Washington State were undocumented.^{vii}
- In Whatcom County, 93% of producers are white, 5% are Asian, and 2.5% are Hispanic or Latino.^{viii}
- Of the 2,982 agricultural producers in Whatcom County, 44% are female.^{ix}
- In Whatcom County, 862 farmers (29%) are new and beginning farmers who have operated a farm or ranch for 10 years or less.^x
- In Whatcom County, 274 farmers (9%) are veterans.^{xi}
- In a 2019 survey of restaurant workers, only 31% of employers offered medical insurance for employees.^{xii}
- In Washington State, 54% of farmworkers reported they have had more difficulty paying for food since the COVID-19 crisis began.^{xiii}
- BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and other people of color) residents are disproportionately likely to face food insecurity. For example, in Whatcom County, 4.5% of SNAP users are American Indian/Alaska Native, while only 2% of the total population is American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 7% of SNAP users are two or more races, while only 3.5% of total residents are two or more races.^{xiv}



Farmworkers are more likely to receive low wages, have few labor protections, and face threats to their health.

Goal 1: Cultivate equity and justice in our food system

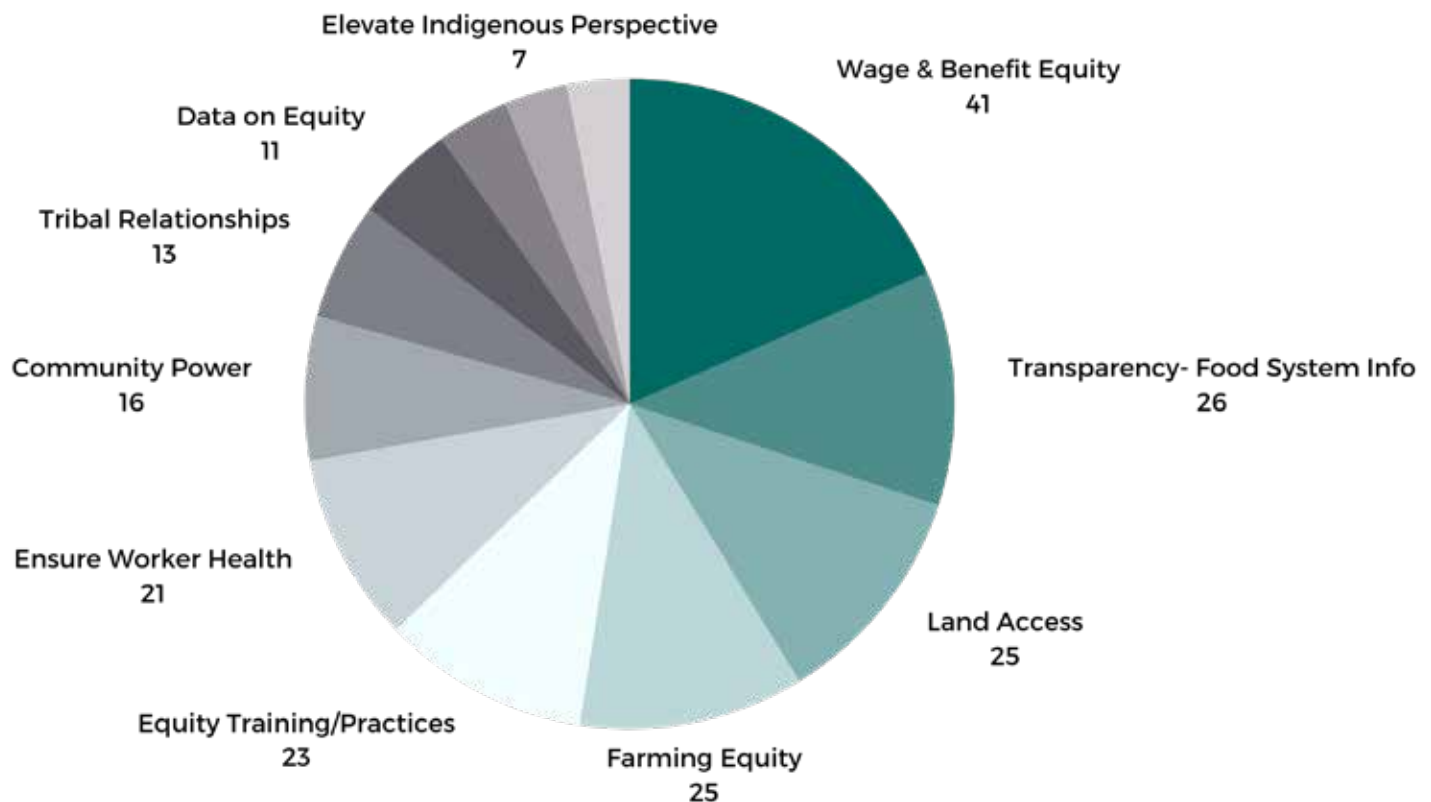
Throughout the community engagement process that informed this plan, it became clear that embedding equity in our food system plans was necessary to create the outcomes the community desired.

Participants spoke of the need for fair wages for food system workers, improved access to land for socially disadvantaged populations, support for immigrants, ensuring health for all workers, and improving the accessibility of the county's communications around food systems initiatives.

Addressing systemic barriers to full participation in our food systems will create the greatest opportunity to address the critical areas highlighted from public engagement. [See Food System Committee webpage for full community survey and event results.](#)

Through the Whatcom County Food System Plan, we have an opportunity to collaborate with organizations led by and for BIPOC residents to address these inequities.

Key themes from community engagement sessions:



Goal 1: Cultivate equity and justice in our food system

Policy


















Collaboration

County
Leadership

Infrastructure

Education and
Programming

Goal 1: Objectives & Actions		Category
1.1 Increase health, wealth, and leadership with BIPOC and under-represented communities across our food system	1.1.1 Remove barriers to engagement in local food programs (i.e., CSAs, farmers markets, Market Match, community gardening, etc.), create funding, partnership, and collaboration opportunities for organizations led by and for BIPOC and other socially disadvantaged communities	 
	1.1.2 Improve access to financial tools for food systems development (i.e., access to capital, low interest loans, microloans, grant programs, and other funding opportunities), create funding, partnership, and collaboration opportunities for organizations led by and for BIPOC and other socially disadvantaged communities	 
	1.1.3 Build relationships and opportunities for collaboration with cultural liaisons to support existing food sovereignty projects already underway	 
	1.1.4 Engage with and reflect the diversity of our communities—across class, race and ethnicity, genders, belief systems, etc.—in all Whatcom County planning and communications about food systems	
1.2 Strengthen support for immigrants in Whatcom County	1.2.1 Support food policy-related goals in the Child and Family Action Plan and the Health Protection for Immigrant Families Task Force Report .	 
	1.2.2 Strengthen the capacity of local employers, businesses, and service agencies to respond to immigration-related issues	
	1.2.3 Improve service systems to better meet the needs of families, including immigrant families	 
	1.2.4 Require mandatory training for county staff and contractors (particularly criminal justice and health and human services) related to anti-discrimination/anti-bias approaches, culturally and linguistically appropriate services (CLAS), and trauma-informed services	 
	1.2.5 Ensure all materials developed by the county to support food system planning and implementation are offered in multiple languages and that county-sponsored food system events offer interpretation services on-site	

Goal 1: Cultivate equity and justice in our food system

Policy



Collaboration

County
Leadership

Infrastructure

Education and
Programming

Goal 1: Objectives & Actions		Category
1.3 Empower food system workers to lead healthy and safe lives	1.3.1 Fund the engagement of food system workers to improve workplace health and safety standards that meet the principles of the Whatcom Food System Plan	
	1.3.2 Adopt a fair scheduling ordinance, designed by essential farm, food, and hospitality workers, in consultation with employers, to make schedules and breaks more consistent with routines that sustain healthy and safe lives for workers	
	1.3.3 Advocate that the Washington State Insurance Commissioner and Healthcare Authority provide food system workers with better and affordable physical and mental health insurance options	
	1.3.4 Coordinate with local tipped workers to advocate for changes in state laws around tip sharing so that back-of-house kitchen staff benefit and tip sharing is more equitable across the board	
	1.3.5 Support a Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grant for community space that is open during non-traditional hours for food system shift workers	
	1.3.6 Fund and support the Food System Committee in the creation and maintenance of a food system information dashboard, building on the Washington State Health Disparities map, co-created with input from essential food systems workers across sectors that reflect the diversity of our communities	

Goal 2: Protect and regenerate our soil, water, and land

Our soil, water, and land in Whatcom County provide the very foundation of our food system. The food production practices we choose can either extract from or regenerate this natural resource base. Preserving ecosystems for fish and wildlife habitat is also critical to the region's food supply. All of these natural resources are being threatened by warming temperatures, variable precipitation, and an increase in extreme weather events due to climate change. See goal 5 for additional information.

Soil and Land

Well-stewarded farm and forestry land provides environmental benefits in addition to food and fiber. These include aquifer recharge, storm water retention, and wildlife habitat. They also provide aesthetic and recreational values.

In Whatcom County, there are 1,712 farms covering 102,523 acres of land. Of these 1,712 farms:

- 69 farms practiced alley cropping, silvopasture, forest farming, or had riparian forest buffers and windbreaks.
- Just 2% of farms in Whatcom County are USDA certified organic.^{xv}

Valuable farmland and rangeland in Whatcom County is under development pressure. If current trends continue, by 2040, 6,300 farmland/rangeland acres in Whatcom County will be converted to urban and residential land uses.^{xvi}



Photo: Margaret Gerard

Water Quality and Quantity

A reliable supply of water is critical to agricultural production, and maintaining water quality supports fishing and shellfish production in the region.

- Shellfish harvest areas in Portage Bay remain closed to fall harvest because of high fecal coliform in growing waters. Drayton Harbor is at risk of a shellfish growing water downgrade.^{xvii}
- Some drinking water wells have higher than the maximum level of nitrate.^{xviii}
- Lake Whatcom remains vulnerable to the harmful effects of algal blooms due to excessive levels of phosphorus.^{xix}
- The Nooksack River streamflow is strongly seasonal. An oversupply of water occurs in the winter and early spring and can often result in flooding. Droughts in the summer result in lower streamflows during the months that require the most irrigation water use for crop production.^{xx}

Goal 2: Protect and regenerate our soil, water, and land

Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Fish and wildlife are also critical components of the region's food supply. However, development and climate change threaten these populations.

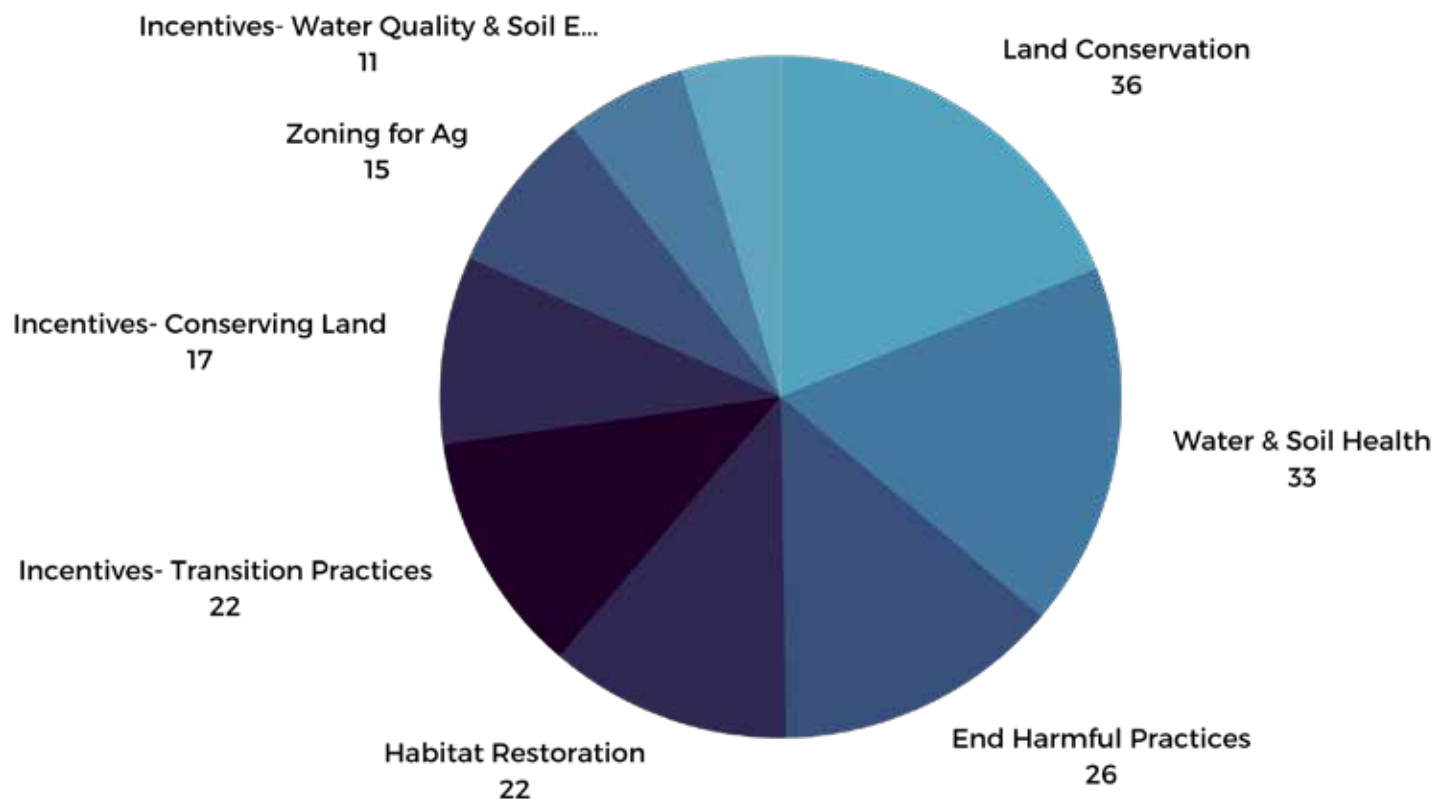
- Fish passage barriers, inadequate riparian areas, and inadequate instream habitat features impair the productivity of valued salmon species and impair the ecosystem processes that provide benefits for adjacent landowners as well as other fish and wildlife species.^{xxi}
- The lack of undeveloped and connected patches of native vegetation for movement and crossings in lowland Whatcom County limit movement both for local and migrating wildlife.^{xxii}

Throughout the community engagement process that informed this plan, the need to preserve and protect these natural resources was apparent.

Participants spoke of the need to support and grow existing natural resource programs, to support farmers transitioning to organic and regenerative practices, to protect water—both quantity and quality—and restore wildlife habitat.

[See Food System Committee webpage](#) for full community survey and event results.

Key themes from community engagement sessions:



Goal 2: Protect and regenerate our soil, water, and land

Policy



Collaboration

County
Leadership

Infrastructure

Education and
Programming

Goal 2: Objectives & Actions		Category
2.1 Protect Agricultural land in Whatcom County and increase the acreage used for local and regenerative food production	2.1.1 Establish a baseline inventory of the number of acres of agricultural land in Whatcom County currently used for local food production. Use the baseline inventory to set an achievable target of acres for local food production and organic food production for the county to strive for. Partner with the Ag Advisory Committee to achieve this action.	
	2.1.2 Increase the agricultural acreages placed under conservation easements through the current Whatcom County Conservation Easement Program; ensure adequate county staff support to facilitate additional conservation easement program outreach and signups and to leverage state and federal grants; actively seek funds for agricultural acreage utilized for local food production	
	2.1.3 Increase funding to the Conservation Futures Fund; direct additional revenues to increase the number of conservation easements with a focus on acquiring land that specifically produces food for local consumption	
	2.1.4 When the county updates the 1995 Open Space Plan, revise the public benefit rating system for the Open Space: Farm and Agricultural Conservation Land sub-classification to ensure more land management for agriculture	
	2.1.5 Support land trusts and cooperative projects to develop permanently affordable housing communities that provide farmland access for the residents for commercial and non-commercial local food production. Partner with the Ag program staff in Planning and Development Services to achieve this.	
	2.1.6 Work with farmers and land trusts to determine acreage goals and farmland preservation strategies; focus on community farms and forests that are locally owned and managed, are working lands, and benefit the public.	

Goal 2: Protect and regenerate our soil, water, and land

Policy



Collaboration

County
Leadership

Infrastructure

Education and
Programming

Goal 2: Objectives & Actions

Category

2.2 Improve the health of our county's soils

2.2.1 Increase funding support for Washington State University (WSU) Extension and the Whatcom Conservation District to increase technical assistance and educational opportunities for growers and future growers to learn soil management best practices and transition from conventional to organic production methods (See also related objective 5.3):



- 5.3.1 Promote adoption of farm management practices that maximize soil carbon storage and increase water and nutrient availability
- 5.3.2 Coordinate state and federal agricultural adaptation resources (e.g., Inflation Reduction Act funds) to support farmers in making informed business decisions in a changing climate
- 5.3.3 Increase farm resilience to sea level rise, shoreline erosion, and river flooding by protecting and restoring riparian estuary habitat, restoring wetlands, and increasing natural water storage
- 5.3.4 Encourage increases in research and development of drought- and heat-resistant agricultural crops and flexible infrastructure to support diversified crops
- 5.3.5 Reduce the risk of devastating impacts of extreme weather and natural disasters by encouraging food producers to diversify their products

Goal 2: Protect and regenerate our soil, water, and land

Policy



Collaboration

County
Leadership

Infrastructure

Education and
Programming

Goal 2: Objectives & Actions

Category

2.3 Conserve water and support water efficiency projects and policies	2.3.1 Work with the health department and state officials to explore opportunities for utilizing greywater for growing food; existing greywater rules need systems and implementation support to align with the needs of small-scale agriculture	
	2.3.2 Encourage municipalities within the county to set water rate policies that promote conservation and prioritize food production; this could include offering an “irrigation-only” reduced rate to gardeners and urban farmers using municipal water to irrigate their crops.	
	2.3.3 Collaborate to implement sustainable funding mechanisms that support water efficiency (e.g., providing technical assistance to producers, offering rebates for water efficient irrigation equipment)	
	2.3.4 Continue the Whatcom Water Alliance rebates for WaterSense irrigation controllers for county residents and encourage the City of Bellingham to continue their rebate program for WaterSense irrigation controllers	
	2.3.5 Support collaborative efforts to address water supply and salmon recovery	
	2.3.6 Initiate and support programs by the Whatcom Conservation District, the Whatcom Water Alliance, and others to reduce water use on lawns, golf courses, and landscaping	

Goal 2: Protect and regenerate our soil, water, and land

Policy



Collaboration



County
Leadership



Infrastructure



Education and
Programming



Goal 2: Objectives & Actions

Category

2.4 Ensure water quality through habitat restoration and improved agricultural practices

2.4.1 Increase the number of acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to improve both water quality and fish habitat; encourage the Whatcom Conservation District to utilize available state and federal funds to supplement CREP



2.4.2 Explore the development of a “working buffers” program: working buffers are an approach to riparian conservation that combines stream restoration with low-impact food production in a way that incentivizes sustainable stewardship of the buffer area by the land-owner



2.4.3 Ensure public landscape maintenance by the county adheres to best management practices—including integrated pest management, no-spray road maintenance, and the use of native plants—and does not negatively affect food production and water sources



Goal 2: Protect and regenerate our soil, water, and land

Policy



Collaboration



County
Leadership



Infrastructure



Education and
Programming



Goal 2: Objectives & Actions

Category

2.5 Protect and restore natural ecosystems and wildlife corridors that community members rely on for food provision	2.5.1 Increase the number of acres enrolled in the CREP to engage more agricultural producers and landowners to plant native trees to enhance wildlife corridors and protect fish-bearing streams and rivers	
	2.5.2 Secure additional funds and increase capacity in the Whatcom Conservation District's Fish Passage program to convert culverts on county land that currently prevent fish passage	
	2.5.3 Secure additional funds and increase staff capacity in the Whatcom Conservation District to support programs to improve riparian buffer installations on properties that aren't eligible for CREP, such as the Salmon Recovery program	
	2.5.4 Prioritize conservation easement purchases that maintain habitat corridor connectivity to support populations of wildlife for hunting	
	2.5.5 Enforce the Open Space public access program to enable foraging, hunting, etc. on land enrolled in this program	

Goal 3: Build a resilient and vibrant local food economy

The benefits of building a strong local food economy are clear: Farms and local food businesses boost employment and income in the community; buy from other local businesses, which increases economic activity; and build the local tax base that supports infrastructure and services. Although Whatcom County boasts some important local food system assets, significant opportunity exists to grow this sector of the economy to meet growing consumer demand for local and regional products. For this economic growth to support a more equitable food system, it is critical to center the rights of workers and value their contributions to the food system.

In Whatcom County, farming and fishing are significant contributors to the local economy:

- The market value of all agricultural products sold in 2017 was over \$372 million.^{xxiii}
- In 2017, 210 berry farms in Whatcom County accounted for \$112 million in sales (30% of the county total), and 103 dairy facilities generated \$180 million in sales (48% of the county total).^{xxiv}
- 41% of farms in the county are small farms with fewer than nine acres in production.^{xxv}
- 15% of farms sell directly to consumers—through farmers markets, community supported agriculture (CSAs), or farm stands.^{xxvi}
- The county has 51 businesses that are registered as “fishing” businesses and 12 registered as “shellfish” businesses.^{xxvii}



In 2017, 210 berry farms in Whatcom County accounted for \$112 million in sales (30% of the county total).

In Whatcom County, there are many businesses adding value to raw agricultural and seafood products, processing them both for export and for local sale, including 62 licensed food processing businesses and 84 commissary kitchens. However, kitchen access and space can be limited, and some industries lack the infrastructure to meet demand of both consumers and producers.

Farmers raising animals for meat and poultry struggle to find butchers. **The main USDA-certified meat processing facility has a waitlist longer than three years.**^{xxviii} Those in the seafood industry are met with regulatory and processing space barriers to scaling operations.

There are 560 businesses in the food services and accommodations sector, which includes full-service restaurants; limited-service eating places; special food services, such as food service contractors, caterers, and mobile food services; and drinking places.^{xxix}

Goal 3: Build a resilient and vibrant local food economy

All of these food system sectors — from farming to food service — employ thousands of Whatcom County residents.

There are 7,544 farm laborers working on Whatcom County farms, with a total payroll of \$76,345,000.^{xxx} The H-2A temporary agricultural workers program allows Whatcom County farmers to hire non-U.S. labor. In 2020, there were 75 certified H-2A workers in the county (down from a peak of 496 in 2015).^{xxxi}

These workers often make low wages, barely above the state's minimum wage. Meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers, along with fast food cooks are among the lowest paid food system workers in the region.^{xxxii}

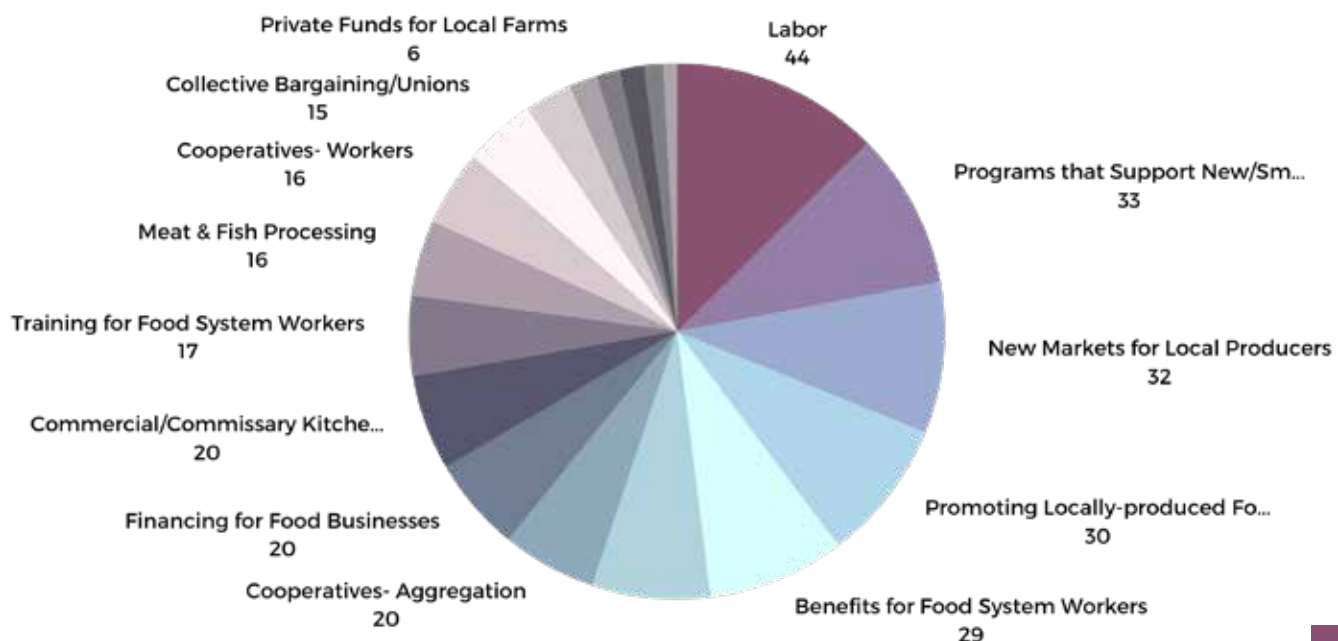
There is an increasing demand for locally produced food in Whatcom County. Dockside Market, which offers direct seafood sales twice a month, has grown rapidly since it was launched in 2020. The biggest farmers market in Whatcom County is the Bellingham Farmers Market, which has seen total sales double in the past decade, including a 16% increase from the 2021 to 2022 market seasons.^{xxxiii}

Throughout the community engagement process that informed this plan, there was much discussion of building a robust local food system for residents in the region.

Participants spoke to the need to increase the supply of locally grown food by supporting farmers and food entrepreneurs with food system infrastructure for processing. Participants also spoke to the need to remove barriers that keep locally grown food inaccessible for some residents by utilizing the marketing tools and buying power of local governments to build demand. There is a need to build a skilled labor force for agriculture and food processing and to support the next generation of farmers. And in all of these sectors, residents of Whatcom County were interested in supporting local and cooperative ownership of these food system businesses.

Through the Whatcom County Food System Plan, we have an opportunity to collaborate with community partners, small businesses, and cooperatives to build a vibrant and resilient local food system.

Key themes from community engagement sessions:



Goal 3: Build a resilient and vibrant local food economy

Policy



Collaboration

County
Leadership

Infrastructure

Education and
Programming

Goal 3: Objectives & Actions

Category

3.1 Increase the supply of local, sustainable food produced in Whatcom County

3.1.1 Secure additional funds to support partner organizations that provide small grants and low-interest loans to producers and processors who distribute products locally and who may not be eligible for traditional sources of financing



3.1.2 Create and expand the network of shared-use kitchens and processing facilities for food businesses, food producers, and retailers



3.1.3 Support the development of an affordable, local, commercially licensed smoker/processor for seafood, which will reduce carbon emissions from long-distance export



3.1.4 Collaborate with tribes to explore opportunities to increase our fisheries resource (i.e., salmon run size) in Whatcom County



3.1.5 Coordinate and support training for meat processing workforce development, including for custom slaughter butchers and Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) meat cutters, to increase the number of meat processors in the county.



3.1.6 Analyze and revise county permitting and zoning processes related to meat processing to remove barriers for small-scale butchers and WSDA meat cutters



3.1.7 Remove barriers to and support the development of additional food distribution and processing centers in the county



3.1.8 Support innovative methods to increase the supply of local food (i.e., aquaculture, vertical farming, etc.)



Goal 3: Build a resilient and vibrant local food economy

Policy



Collaboration

County
Leadership

Infrastructure

Education and
Programming

Goal 3: Objectives & Actions

Category

3.2 Remove barriers to and build consumer demand for locally produced agricultural products and facilitate markets for local producers and food businesses	3.2.1 Increase local food procurement for county departments and county-subsidized facilities and programs (such as childcare and senior meal programs)	
	3.2.2 Direct a portion of the Whatcom County Lodging Tax Advisory Committee (LTAC) funds toward supporting events that celebrate and enhance area agriculture, fishing, and food activities to build demand for locally grown and sourced foods; potential events could include Seafest, Whatcom County Farm Tour, Eat Local Month Restaurant Week, as well as smaller farmers markets (e.g., Ferndale, Lynden, etc.)	
	3.2.3 Encourage cities within the county to waive all applicable fees for farmers and seafood markets and mobile markets, especially those in low-income areas	
	3.2.4 Invest in a relationship with the Port of Bellingham to identify opportunities to collaborate on food system projects that build demand for locally produced foods	
3.3 Expand workforce development and readiness to prepare community members for successful food system employment	3.3.1 Fund and develop a county network of skilled workers to host the creation of skill, technical training, and apprenticeship opportunities within and outside current institutional education systems in the county (i.e., Bellingham Technical College and Whatcom Community College)	
	3.3.2 Support the Workforce Training and Retraining Advisory Group at Whatcom Community College; encourage inclusion/appointment of community organizations led by/for essential food systems workers	
	3.3.3 Work with the Washington State Department of Commerce tribal liaison and collaborate with the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe to expand access to workforce development opportunities for their tribal members	

Goal 3: Build a resilient and vibrant local food economy

Policy



Collaboration








County
Leadership

Infrastructure

Education and
Programming

Goal 3: Objectives & Actions

Category

3.4 Support new and beginning farmers in acquiring farmland and support effective transition of farmland to the next generation of farmers	3.4.1 Advocate for the creation of a beginning farmer tax credit at the state level that would provide sales tax and use tax exemptions for beginning farmers	
	3.4.2 Advocate for the creation of a real estate excise tax exemption at the state level for transfer of ownership between current landowners and beginning farmers	
	3.4.3 Provide funding for the conservation easement program's buy-protect-sell initiative to continue the program once federal grant funds are exhausted; the buy-protect-sell initiative helps make land more affordable for beginning farmers	
	3.4.4 Develop a program to connect landowners who are either enrolled in or eligible for the Open Space: Farm and Agricultural Conservation Land program with farmers who are interested in leasing land	
3.5 Invest in local and cooperative ownership of food system businesses	3.5.1 Support, collaborate with, and promote community development organizations that offer succession planning, employee ownership options (e.g., employee stock ownership programs, cooperatives, etc.), and similar business succession and retirement programs to preserve jobs, local ownership, and civic engagement	 
	3.5.2 Provide grant writing support and technical assistance to cooperatively owned food and agriculture businesses applying for state and federal funding	

Goal 4: Ensure access to healthy food for all

Fresh, healthy, local food is abundant in Whatcom County, but it is inaccessible to a significant number of our residents. In particular, food insecurity disproportionately impacts children and families.

- Prior to the pandemic, about 12% of residents were considered food insecure, and some estimate that one in five residents are now food insecure.^{xxxiv}
- An early indicator of rising food insecurity is the number of visits to the food banks in Whatcom County; 2022 has seen the biggest jump in utilization of food banks, a 17% increase.^{xxxv}
- Over 40% of Whatcom County school children are eligible for free or reduced lunch, with rates as high as 66% in some districts and 82% at tribal schools.^{xxxvi}
- Whatcom County has three census tracts that are considered food deserts. Over 24,000 residents live in these census tracts, a number that is sure to increase with the closure of more grocery stores.^{xxxvii}
- SNAP and WIC are state-managed programs that offer food access support in the form of dollars for food purchasing, but users of these programs have fewer options for local, healthy food.
 - Some areas, such as the Foothills area in East County, have an inadequate number of vendors that accept WIC.
 - Of our five farmers markets in Whatcom County, three accept SNAP.^{xxxviii} Users of programs such as SNAP and WIC have fewer options for local, healthy food.
 - The Market Match program offers SNAP users double the dollars for produce purchases at farmers markets that accept SNAP. Unfortunately, matching dollars from the state are decreasing from \$40 per person per market to \$25 per person per market in 2023, while at the same time the cost of food is rising.



Photo: Cat Sieh



Photo: Cat Sieh



Above: There are limited options for SNAP recipients to get local produce.

Left: Open house of Foothills Foodbank, July 2021.

Goal 4: Ensure access to healthy food for all

Throughout the community engagement process that informed this plan, ensuring access to healthy food was a top community priority.

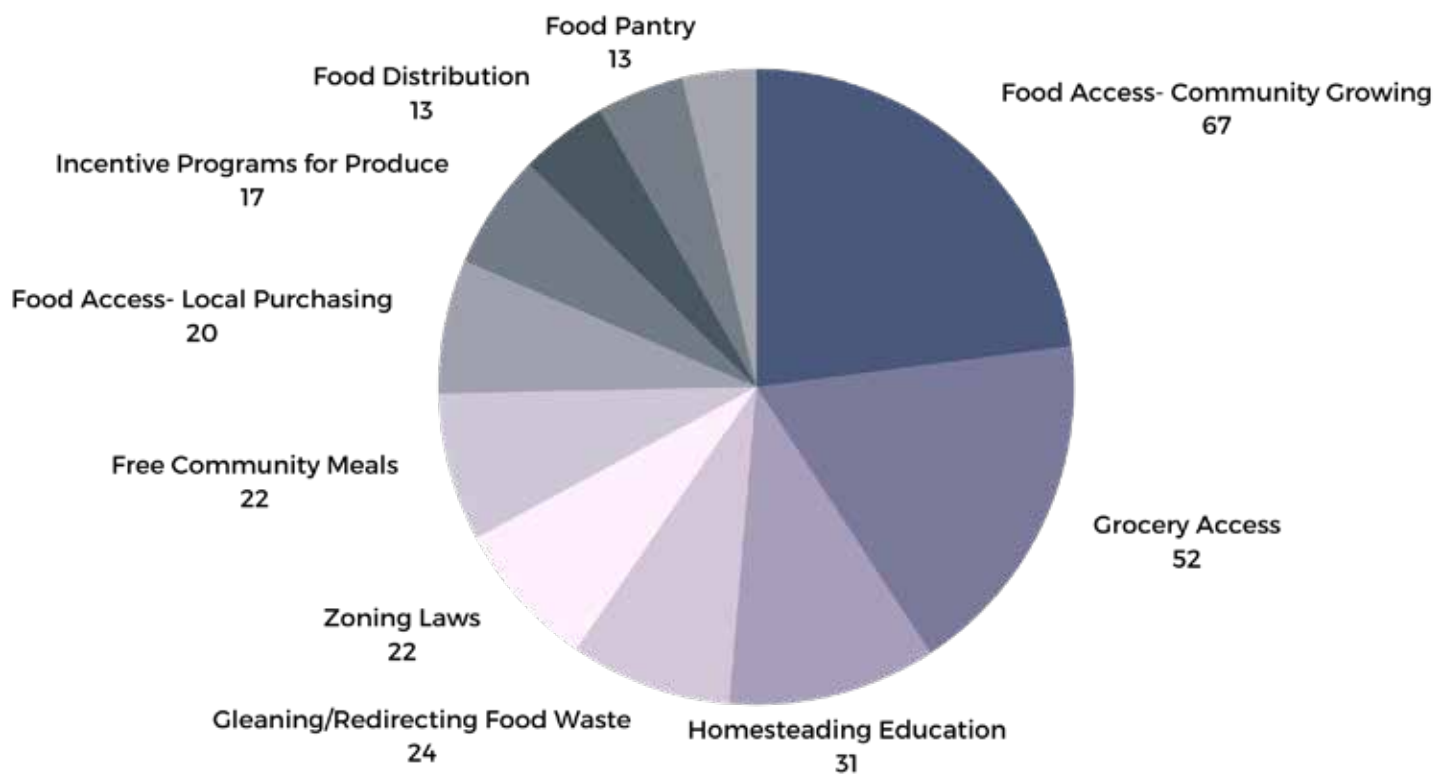
Participants spoke of the need to support the built environment infrastructure for food—grocery stores, commercial kitchens, and food banks. They also spoke of the importance of programs that support community members' access to food—both formal and informal. There was much discussion of the need to reduce wasted food

that could otherwise feed people, and the need to provide education and space for community members to grow their own food.

See [Food System Committee webpage](#) for full community survey and event results.

The Whatcom County Food System Plan provides the opportunity for the county to collaborate with the many organizations working to improve access to healthy food for all residents.

Key themes from community engagement sessions:



Goal 4: Ensure access to healthy food for all

Policy



Collaboration

County
Leadership

Infrastructure

Education and
Programming

Goal 4: Objectives & Actions

Category

4.1 Build and design our communities to ensure food access and eliminate food deserts

4.1.1 Assess the policy barriers (i.e., non-compete clauses) that may prevent grocery stores from operating in recognized areas with low access to food



4.1.2 Consider waiving permit fees for grocery stores in US-DA-designated low-income/low-access census tracts (aka “food deserts”)



4.1.3 Conduct a nonprofit grocery store feasibility study to see if selling surplus food at low cost to food insecure individuals is a viable model for Whatcom County



4.1.4 Increase transportation access to food; locate existing programs along transportation routes and reroute public transits for more equitable access to food access points as necessary



4.1.5 Collaborate with community groups to mitigate the impacts of and eliminate the causes of food deserts



4.1.6 Work with the Whatcom County Food Bank Network to assess the needs at food banks service capacity (i.e., infrastructure, staffing/volunteer capacity, and funding needs); identify opportunities for shared resources



4.1.7 Explore opportunities for more commercial kitchens and cold storage available for community groups addressing food access and food recovery (i.e., food banks, homeless services, neighborhood groups)



4.1.8 Direct county parks and recreation department to explore upgrades to the Senior Center kitchen facilities to increase the capacity of the Senior Meals program; explore opportunities for shared use of these facilities with other community groups addressing food access



4.1.9 Identify and implement strategies like a Healthy Corner Store Initiative program or a Good Food Rebate program/tax incentive for neighborhood retailers and grocery stores to stock and promote nutritionally dense food options, including local fruits and vegetables



Goal 4: Ensure access to healthy food for all

Policy



Collaboration













County
Leadership

Infrastructure

Education and
Programming

Goal 4: Objectives & Actions

Category

4.2 Create and promote opportunities for people to grow, prepare, and share their own food	4.2.1 Identify interest, land, and funding to develop more community gardens in low-income/low-access neighborhoods; partner with the WSU Extension Master Gardeners and the City of Bellingham Greenways program to identify opportunities to acquire and expand community seed gardens and community gardens in Bellingham	 
	4.2.2 Increase support for community educational programs for gardening, seed banking, cooking, and food preservation; focus efforts on low-income/low-access areas in the county	
	4.2.3 Engage tribal partners and cultural liaisons to learn about barriers to and opportunities for hunting, foraging, and fishing as strategies to increase access to healthy food	
4.3 Invest in programs that make healthy food more affordable	4.3.1 Adequately fund the Whatcom County Food Bank Network to meet the dramatic increase in food insecure individuals in the county; ensure that a portion of the increased funding to food banks is directed to purchase food directly from Whatcom County producers	 
	4.3.2 Ensure consistent funding for and increase the number of farmers markets and food outlets that accept nutrition incentive programs for SNAP recipients	
	4.3.3 Work with WIC to expand its services to stores and markets in underserved areas (i.e., the foothills region)	
	4.3.4 Advocate that the state increase funding in the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition program and the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition program	
	4.3.5 Encourage large communal meal sites (community centers, senior centers, workplace cafeterias, etc.) to adopt healthy food procurement policies that prioritize access to healthy, locally grown foods	 
	4.3.6 Support universal school meals, including summer meal programs, that are nutrient-dense and in-line with the principles in this food system plan.	

Goal 4: Ensure access to healthy food for all

Policy


Collaboration


County
Leadership


Infrastructure


Education and
Programming


Goal 4: Objectives & Actions

Category

4.4 Scale up food recovery efforts in Whatcom County

4.4.1 Coordinate efforts and collaboration between food recovery organizations, grocery stores, food banks, and community groups to ensure equitable and consistent food recovery to alleviate conflict over reclaiming food



4.4.2 Advocate for incentives for food businesses and farmers to donate surplus food



4.4.3 Fund and expand the food recovery program



Goal 5: Mitigate emissions from food system activities and adapt the food system to a changing climate

Many food system activities contribute greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere, which accelerate the warming of our climate. These activities include emissions from fossil fuels used on-farm and in the transport of food, emissions from ranching and animal agriculture, and the greenhouse gas emissions released when wasted food decomposes.

Also, the food system is increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of the climate changes that are already occurring, as the warming temperatures, variable precipitation, and increase in extreme weather events impact food production, farmers' livelihoods, and farmworkers' health.

The objectives and actions in this goal speak to *both* the need to reduce the emissions from food system and farming activities and the need to prepare our agricultural and food systems for the impacts of a changing climate.

In particular, Whatcom County is projected to experience the following climate changes, which will have a direct impact on the food system:^{xxxix}



This aerial photo shows Whatcom fields from the November 2021 floods.

A warmer region:

- By the 2050s, average annual temperatures in Puget Sound are projected to increase by 4.2°F to 5.5 °F under low- and high-emissions scenarios, respectively, compared to the 1970–99 average of 46.5 °F. By 2100, they are projected to be 5.5°F to 9.1°F warmer under low- and high-emissions scenarios, respectively.
- By the 2050s, under a low-emissions scenario, projections indicate at least 1 to 2 days per year in Whatcom County and at least 2 to 3 days per year in Bellingham specifically when the heat index is above 90°F, compared to zero days historically (1971–2000). By 2100, under a high-emissions scenario, those numbers are projected to rise to as many as 11 days per year in Whatcom County and 20 days in Bellingham.

Goal 5: Mitigate emissions from food system activities and adapt the food system to a changing climate

More frequent and intense precipitation:

- Average annual precipitation in Puget Sound is projected to increase by 4 to 5% by the 2050s under low- and high-emissions scenarios, respectively, and another 2% by the 2080s under both emissions scenarios (relative to the 1970–99 average).
- Under a high-emissions scenario, heavy precipitation events west of the Cascades are projected to increase in intensity by 22% by the 2080s—meaning they will have 22% more rain. Meanwhile, those rain events will become more frequent, occurring five more days per year by the 2080s. (There is more rain in the winter months and less in the summer months.^{xi})

More frequent flooding and warmer rivers:

- Mountains draining into Puget Sound are projected to have 29% less snowpack by the 2040s.
- Flooding in the Nooksack River is expected to become more intense and frequent.
- Under a moderate emissions scenario, streamflow in the Nooksack River during a 100-year flood event (1% probability) is projected to increase by 27% by the 2080s. Under a moderate emissions scenario, summer minimum streamflow in the Nooksack River is projected to decrease by 27% by the 2080s relative to the 1970–99 average, and summertime stream temperatures are projected to increase, reaching levels that exceed the thermal tolerance of most fish species.

Rising sea levels:

- By 2100, relative sea level rise in the Bellingham area is projected to be between 1.5 (likely range of 0.9–2.1 feet) and 1.9 feet (likely range of 1.3–2.7 feet) with a 50% likelihood of exceeding those values under low- and high-emissions scenarios, respectively.

Higher risk of wildfire:

- By the 2050s, western Washington is projected to have 12 more days annually with very high fire danger compared to the 1971–2000 average.

Declining air quality:

- In the future, Whatcom County's air quality is likely to decline during periods of increased wildfire activity in the Pacific Northwest, especially during the summer and early fall.
- Warmer temperatures and increases in ozone pollution may reduce Whatcom County's air quality.



East Badger Road and farmland flooded in November 2021.

Goal 5: Mitigate emissions from food system activities and adapt the food system to a changing climate

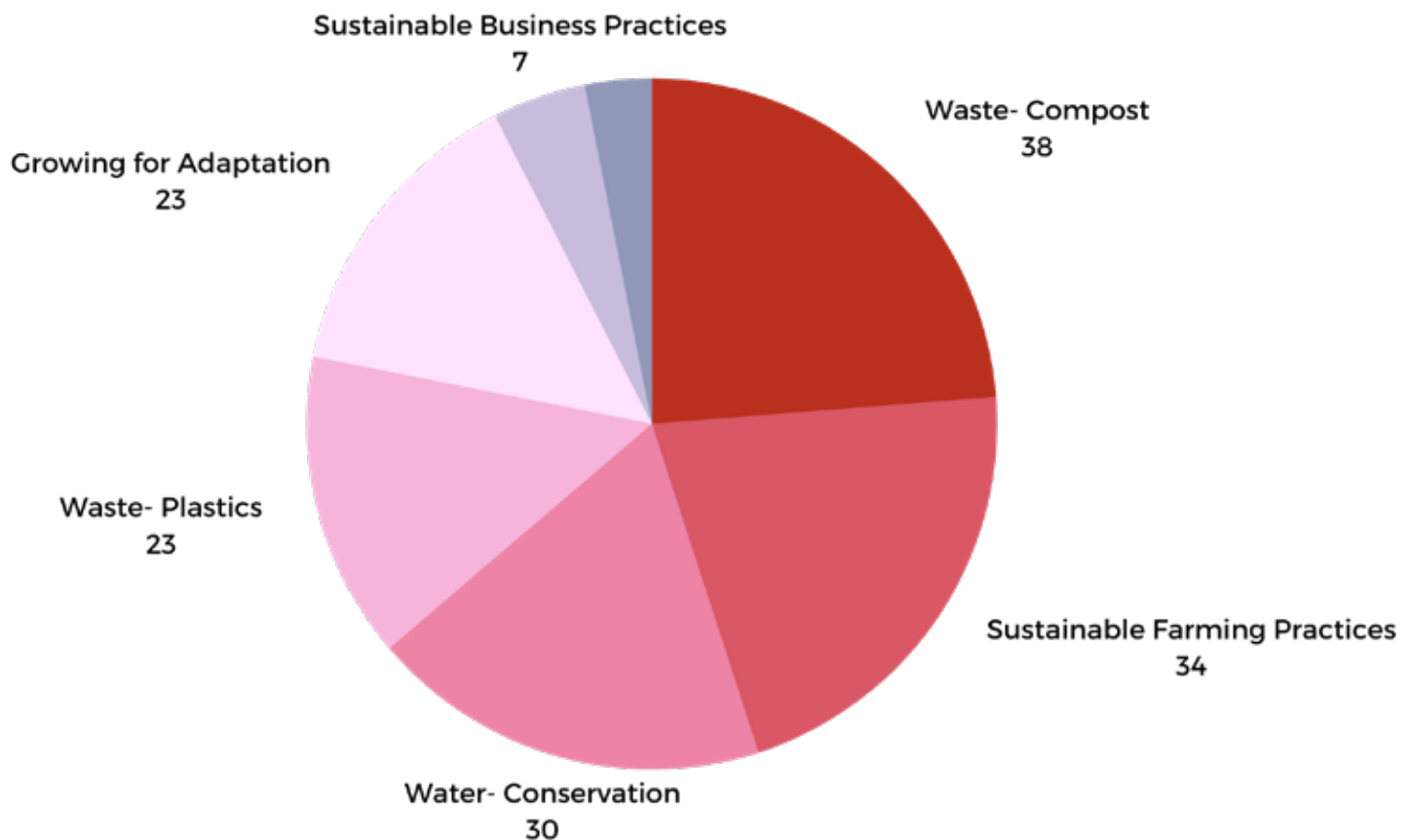
Throughout the community engagement process that informed this plan, climate change was a top concern among participants.

Participants spoke of the need to support farmers' transition to regenerative, sustainable agricultural practices. Also, participants were concerned about food and food-related waste at all levels of the food system. Participants spoke to the need for reduced packaging of food products and additional opportunities for composting services.

There was also much discussion of the impacts on water quality and quantity, which were included in the objectives and actions in goal 2.

The Whatcom County Food System Plan provides the opportunity for the county to collaborate with the many organizations working to improve access to healthy food for all residents.

Key themes from community engagement sessions:



Goal 5: Mitigate emissions from food system activities and adapt the food system to a changing climate

Policy



Collaboration



County Leadership



Infrastructure



Education and Programming



Goal 5: Objectives & Actions

Category

MITIGATION: Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from agriculture and food system activities that contribute to climate change

5.1 Reduce GHG emissions from farming and food system activities

5.1.1 Support existing programs for energy efficiency improvements and alternative energy solutions for agricultural businesses throughout Whatcom County



5.1.2 Create a recognition program for agricultural businesses that achieve target levels of energy efficiency, conservation, and renewable energy use



5.1.3 Work with livestock producers in the county to reduce methane emissions from activities related to ranching and livestock production



5.1.4 Advocate for government and other incentives to encourage the use of low-emission vehicles on-farm and throughout food transportation systems



5.1.5 Encourage integrated crop and livestock production on farms in a closed loop system to reduce the transport of manure and the use of synthetic fertilizers



5.1.6 Encourage producers to reduce their use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, the manufacture and transport of which contributes to GHG emissions and to water and soil pollution



5.1.7 Encourage the reduction of short-term plastic use (e.g., plastic mulch) on farms



5.1.8 Encourage producers to participate in the Washington State Conservation Commission's Sustainable Fields and Farms program, a grant program that provides funds and technical assistance to assist farmers in implementing practices that sequester carbon



Goal 5: Mitigate emissions from food system activities and adapt the food system to a changing climate

Policy



Collaboration

County
Leadership

Infrastructure

Education and
Programming

Goal 5: Objectives & Actions

Category

5.2 Reduce waste in our food system and specifically reduce food waste by 50 percent	5.2.1 Adopt public procurement policies that guide food waste reduction at county facilities and events; aim for zero-waste events in all county facilities	
	5.2.2 Support a statewide plastic stewardship program: businesses who produce packaged goods would share the cost of ensuring that those materials are properly recycled	
	5.2.3 Expand curbside food waste and yard waste pickup and other options for composting countywide	
	5.2.4 Support recommendations and goals of the 2021 Whatcom Solid and Hazardous Waste Management Plan specific to food waste and recovery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase support and advertising for the WSU composting education programs through the Master Composting and Recycling program • Increase recovery of organic materials from multifamily, commercial, and industrial sources • Periodically assess programs in development and the funds available and reallocate funds on an as-needed basis to meet the implementation priorities for waste reduction, recycling, and composting • Support and fund commercial education through targeted outreach, commercial waste audits, and technical assistance specifically related to construction/demolition and food waste • Develop food waste management programs, including potential programs that connect restaurants with farmers who would use food waste as livestock feed 	

Goal 5: Mitigate emissions from food system activities and adapt the food system to a changing climate

Policy



Collaboration

County
Leadership

Infrastructure

Education and
Programming

Goal 5: Objectives & Actions

Category

5.3 Adapt our agricultural production systems and practices to a changing climate (see also goal 2)	5.3.1 Promote adoption of farm management practices that maximize soil carbon storage and increase water and nutrient availability	
	5.3.2 Coordinate state and federal agricultural adaptation resources (e.g., Inflation Reduction Act funds) to support farmers in making informed business decisions in a changing climate	
	5.3.3 Increase farm resilience to sea level rise, shoreline erosion, and river flooding by protecting and restoring riparian estuary habitat, restoring wetlands, and increasing natural water storage	
	5.3.4 Encourage increases in research and development of drought- and heat-resistant agricultural crops and flexible infrastructure to support diversified crops	
	5.3.5 Reduce the risk of devastating impacts of extreme weather and natural disasters by encouraging food producers to diversify their products	
5.4 Protect food system workers during extreme weather events	5.4.1 Develop local programming and technical assistance for farm workers and owners about heat stress and wildfire smoke and the impacts on farmworkers	
	5.4.2 Support investments in protective equipment and infrastructure (e.g., respirators, air conditioned and heated break rooms, shade structures) to protect food chain workers during extreme weather events	
	5.4.3 Support local, essential farm workers' advocacy for improvements in protections from extreme weather conditions at the state and local levels. Potential improvements include: defining "extreme conditions", "frequency of rest breaks", and "pace of work"; providing access to drinking water during heat and smoke; providing access to shade and/or air conditioned spaces during extreme heat; increasing access to heated spaces during extreme cold; and ensuring no-penalty time off allowances for employees who wish to stay home during extreme weather	

Goal 5: Mitigate emissions from food system activities and adapt the food system to a changing climate

Policy



Collaboration



*County
Leadership*



Infrastructure



*Education and
Programming*



Goal 5: Objectives & Actions

Category

5.5 Fortify our food system against—and support recovery after—climate disruptions

5.5.1 Promote and support local, state, and federal emergency management efforts to provide food system businesses with disaster preparedness and climate resilience resources and tools



5.5.2 Conduct a food supply chain audit to understand where bottlenecks in food distribution/processing exist and what local infrastructure is needed to fill in supply chain gaps in case of climate disruption and natural hazards



5.5.3 Assess existing state and federal programs that help producers recover from natural disasters to identify gaps and opportunities for county action



How will this plan be implemented?

The Food System Plan will serve as a guiding document for Whatcom County for the next ten years (2023–33). A strategic plan is only as strong as its implementation, and to make systemic change, it requires action from all sectors involved—including Whatcom County council members, other local and tribal governments, institutions, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and, most importantly, community members.

The Food System Committee is required by ordinance to oversee the implementation of this plan, identify prioritized actions and funding needs for the plan, ensure ongoing assessment of the needs of the food system, and update the plan at least every three years or as necessary.

The Food System Committee will advocate for the creation of a full-time food system specialist staff position within Whatcom County government. Having dedicated staff to oversee plan implementation is a key success factor in other priority initiatives of the county. This staff person will lead the committee and the community through the following to satisfy the requirements laid out in the ordinance:

- Determine food system indicators and metrics and a means of collecting and publishing the data.
- Develop an implementation plan based on the prioritization of actions.
- Collaborate with and support organizations already carrying out some of the actions.
- Work with elected officials and County government to pass the necessary policy changes included in the plan.
- Maintain community engagement and communicate with residents about progress made and updating the plan.
- Report updates of the plan to the Whatcom County Council.



Get Involved!



There are many ways to stay up to date and get involved with plan implementation:

- Check the Food System Committee website for updates.
- Participate in a Food System Committee meeting.
- Join the Food System Committee or the Whatcom Food Network.
- Join a mailing list with information about the implementation of the food system plan.
- Join or create a workgroup to implement the actions in this plan.



Canning class.

How will this plan be implemented?

Everything in this plan is important and essential for a sustainable, equitable food system, however, there are over 100 actions in this plan, a daunting amount. Throughout the 2023 winter engagement process, Committee members and community members were asked to identify actions that were most interesting to them and they felt they had capacity to move forward. After a tally, the Cream of the Crop list was created. These are 12 actions that are being highlighted in this plan. Some will be easier to execute than others, but as a whole, they showcase the diversity and caliber of content in the food system plan.

Cream of the Crop: 12 Actions for Prioritization

1.1.2 Improve access to financial tools for food systems development (i.e., access to capital, low interest loans, microloans, grant programs, and other funding opportunities), create funding, partnership, and collaboration opportunities for organizations led by and for BIPOC and other socially disadvantaged communities

5.4.3 Support local, essential farm workers' advocacy for improvements in protections from extreme weather conditions at the state level.

2.1.5 Support land trusts and cooperative projects to develop permanently affordable housing communities that provide farmland access for the residents for commercial and non-commercial local food production. Partner with the Ag program staff in Planning and Development Services to achieve this.

4.2.2 Increase support for community educational programs for gardening, seed banking, cooking, and food preservation. Focus efforts on Low-Income/Low-Access areas in the county.

1.1.1 Remove barriers to engagement in local food programs (i.e., CSAs, farmers markets, Market Match, community gardening, etc.), create funding, partnership, and collaboration opportunities for organizations led by and for BIPOC and other socially disadvantaged communities

3.1.6 Analyze County permitting and zoning processes related to meat processing to remove barriers for small-scale butchers and WSDA meat cutters.

4.3.1 Adequately fund the Whatcom County food bank network to meet the dramatic increase in food insecure individuals in the county. Ensure that a portion of the increased funding to food banks are directed to purchase food directly from Whatcom County producers.

5.1.5 Encourage integrated crop and livestock production on farms in a closed loop system to reduce the transport of manure and the use of synthetic fertilizers.

5.2.3 Expand curbside food waste and yard waste pickup and other options for composting countywide.

5.3.1 Promote adoption of farm management practices that maximize soil carbon storage and increase water and nutrient availability.

5.5.2 Conduct a food supply chain audit to understand where bottlenecks in food distribution/processing exist and what local infrastructure is needed to fill in supply chain gaps in case of climate disruption.

3.1.2 Create and expand the network of shared-use kitchens and processing facilities for food businesses, food producers and retailers.

Endnotes

- ⁱ *Native Land Digital*. Native-Land . (2021, October 8). Retrieved March 9, 2023, from <https://native-land.ca/>
- ⁱⁱ Port of Bellingham. (2021, October). *Whatcom County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026*. Whatcom- CEDS. Retrieved March 9, 2023, from <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/63493/Whatcom-County-CEDS-2022-2026-11052021-?bidId=>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Whatcom County Health Department, "COVID-19 Community Health Impact Assessment," July 2021, <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/3760/COVID-19-Community-Health-Impact-Assessm>.
- ^{iv} Whatcom County Health Department, "2018 Community Health Assessment," <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/35972/2018-Whatcom-County-Community-Health-Assessment>.
- ^v Federico Castillo et al., "[Environmental Health Threats to Latino Migrant Farmworkers](#)," *Annual Review of Public Health* 42, no. 1 (April 2021): 257-76.
- ^{vi} "Covid-19 Data : Whatcom County, WA - Official Website." *COVID-19 Data | Whatcom County, WA - Official Website*, 5 July 2020, <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/3427/COVID-19-Data>. From a graph entitled "Percentage of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases, by Race and Ethnicity"
- ^{vii} Whatcom County Public Health Advisory Board, "Health Protection for Immigrant Families in Whatcom County," prepared by Crossroads Consulting, September 2019, https://www.whatcomcounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/72817/Health-Protection-for-Immigrant-Families-Evaluation-Report_Final-92019.
- ^{viii} USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2017 Census of Agriculture, Whatcom County, https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_County_Level/Washington/st53_2_0045_0045.pdf
- ^{ix} Ibid.
- ^x Ibid.
- ^{xi} Ibid.
- ^{xii} Rosie Bradbury, "31% of Restaurants Offer Health Insurance to Workers, Survey Finds," July 31, 2019, *Restaurant Dive*, www.restaurantdive.com/news/survey-31-of-restaurants-offer-health-insurance-to-workers/559857/.
- ^{xiii} California Institute for Rural Studies, "Washington COVID-19 Farmworker Study," accessed February 21, 2023, <https://cirsinc.org/washington/>.
- ^{xiv} United States Census Bureau, "S2201 Food Stamps/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)," accessed February 21, 2023, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=S2201%3A%20FOOD%20STAMPS%2FSUPPLEMENTAL%20NUTRITION%20ASSISTANCE%20PROGRAM%20%28SNAP%29&q=0500000US53073&tid=ACST5Y2020.S2201>.
- ^{xv} USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2017 Census of Agriculture, "County Profile for Whatcom County, Washington," accessed February 21, 2023, https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Washington/cp53073.pdf.
- ^{xvi} American Farmland Trust, "Farms Under Threat 2040," accessed February 21, 2023, <http://development2040.farmland.org/>.
- ^{xvii} Whatcom Conservation District, "FY2023 Annual Work Plan," accessed February 21, 2023, https://www.dropbox.com/sh/jpab7vsmuhc7957/AAB28zDxCWxrd8D4608RJopMa?dl=0&preview=2023_AnnualWorkPlan.pdf.
- ^{xviii} Ibid.
- ^{xix} Ibid.
- ^{xx} Whatcom County Climate Impact Advisory Committee, "Whatcom County Climate Action Plan," 2021, <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/61403/CAP-Final--20211022-ver2>.
- ^{xxi} Whatcom Conservation District, "FY2023 Annual Work Plan."

Endnotes

xxii Ibid.

xxiii USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2017 Census of Agriculture, "County Profile for Whatcom County, Washington," accessed February 21, 2023, https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Washington/cp53073.pdf.

xxiv USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2017 Census of Agriculture, "Table 2. Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold Including Food Marketing Practices and Value-Added Products: 2017 and 2012," 2017, https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_County_Level/Washington/st53_2_0002_0002.pdf.

xxv USDA NASS, "County Profile."

xxvi Ibid.

xxvii U.S. Census Bureau, Economic Surveys, County Business Patterns, accessed February 21, 2023, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0400000US53_0500000US53073&n=11411&tid=CBP2020.CB2000CBP.

xxviii Received by Cat Sieh, *Number of Butchers in Whatcom County*, 14 Feb. 2023.

xxix U.S. Census Bureau, Economic Surveys, County Business Patterns.

xxx USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2017 Census of Agriculture, "Table 7. Hired Farm Labor - Workers and Payroll: 2017," https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_County_Level/Washington/st53_2_0007_0007.pdf.

xxxi Washington State Employment Security Department, "Agricultural Employment and Wages," accessed February 21, 2023, <https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/ag-employment-and-wages>.

xxxii Washington State Employment Security Department, "2022 Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates," July 2022, <https://media.esd.wa.gov/esdwa/Default/ESDWAGOV/labor-market-info/Libraries/Occupational-reports/OES/Occ-employment-and-wage-estimates-2022.pdf>.

xxxiii Data provided by Lora Liegel, director of Bellingham Farmers Market.

xxxiv Map the Meal Gap: "Food insecure" refers to the population with "a lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life or with uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods" (Feeding America, "Map the Meal Gap," accessed February 21, 2023, <https://map.feedingamerica.org/>); Jen Daly, "June 2022 THRIVE | Food Insecurity," June 15, 2022, <https://whatcomcf.org/june-2022-thrive-food-insecurity/>.

xxxv Cohen, Mike. "Visits to Whatcom County Food Banks Each Fiscal Year." Whatcom Food Bank Network, Nov. 2022.

xxxvi Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Child Nutrition Program Reports, accessed February 21, 2023, <https://www.k12.wa.us/policy-funding/child-nutrition/child-nutrition-program-reports>.

xxxvii USDA Economic Research Service, Food Access Research Atlas, accessed February 21, 2023, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas/>.

xxxviii Washington State Department of Health, "2022 WIC and Senior Approved Farmers Markets with Payment Options," updated August 9, 2022, <https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/Documents/Pubs/964-003-FMNPMktReportWesternWAList.pdf?uid=62faabd936990>.

xxxix Whatcom County Climate Action Plan: Summary of Observed Trends and Projected Climate Change Impacts, January 2020, <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/53837/Whatcom-County-Climate-Science-Summary-2020?bidId=>.

xl Whatcom County Climate Action Plan 2021, accessed February 21, 2023, <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/61403/CAP-Final--2021022-ver2>.

TO: City Council
FROM: Alyssa Jones Wood, Sustainability Coordinator
DATE: September 12, 2023
SUBJECT: 2022 Green Team Sustainability Report

1) Recommended Action:

None. This item is for information only.

2) Background:

Since 2019, the City's interdepartmental Green Team has produced an annual report on sustainability measures. This year's report compares data from 2022 to data from both 2015 and 2019 baselines for sustainability metrics.

3) Policy Support:

2023-2024 Strategic Priority: Be a Leader in Environmental Sustainability:
Reduce the carbon footprint of the City organization; and
Include environmental protection in City projects.

4) Alternatives:

☐ No alternatives identified at this time. Staff requests feedback on recommended actions and goals.

5) Fiscal Notes:

Staff participating on the Green Team collectively spend approximately 200 hours annually to collaborate on the implementation of sustainability measures, developing metrics, and reviewing the program's progress on its goals. Discreet projects with financial impacts are routinely budgeted and reviewed by City Council as appropriate.

6) Attachments:

A. 2022 Green Team Sustainability Report

MEMO

Date: August 9, 2023

To: Tumwater City Council

From: City of Tumwater Green Team



2022 Green Team Sustainability Report

Purpose

This report evaluates the City's current practices related to climate, water, energy, transportation, and solid waste. This is the third consecutive Green Team Sustainability Report for the City of Tumwater. For all but two metrics (waste and greenhouse gas emissions) a baseline year of 2019 is used. A greenhouse gas (GHG) baseline year of 2015 was established by Resolution by the City Council and reported as such. A solid waste baseline had not been available in prior years and thus 2021 is established as the baseline year. This report compares 2022 data to each metric's established baseline year, goal, and past data wherever data was available.

Climate

Greenhouse Gas Emissions of City operations

City operations produced an estimated total annual emissions of 3,736 metric tons of CO_{2e} in 2022. Total emissions in 2022 are 3% below the 2015 baseline. Emissions from the City's water and sewer infrastructure increased by about 11%, the City vehicle fleet emissions increased by 8%, and emissions associated with lighting, heating, and cooling City buildings and facilities fell by 20% between 2015 and 2022. However, Tumwater's population grew by about 33% between 2015 and 2022. When expressed in terms of MTCO_{2e}/City resident, the 2022 City operations carbon footprint was about 26% lower than the 2015 per resident carbon footprint.

The City of Tumwater takes part in Puget Sound Energy's Green Direct program and received certificates for 5,600,000 kWh generated at the Skookumchuck Wind Farm and Lund Hill Solar Farm during the 2022 calendar year. Because of this, the net emissions of City operations in 2022 are estimated to be 1,092 metric tons of CO_{2e}.

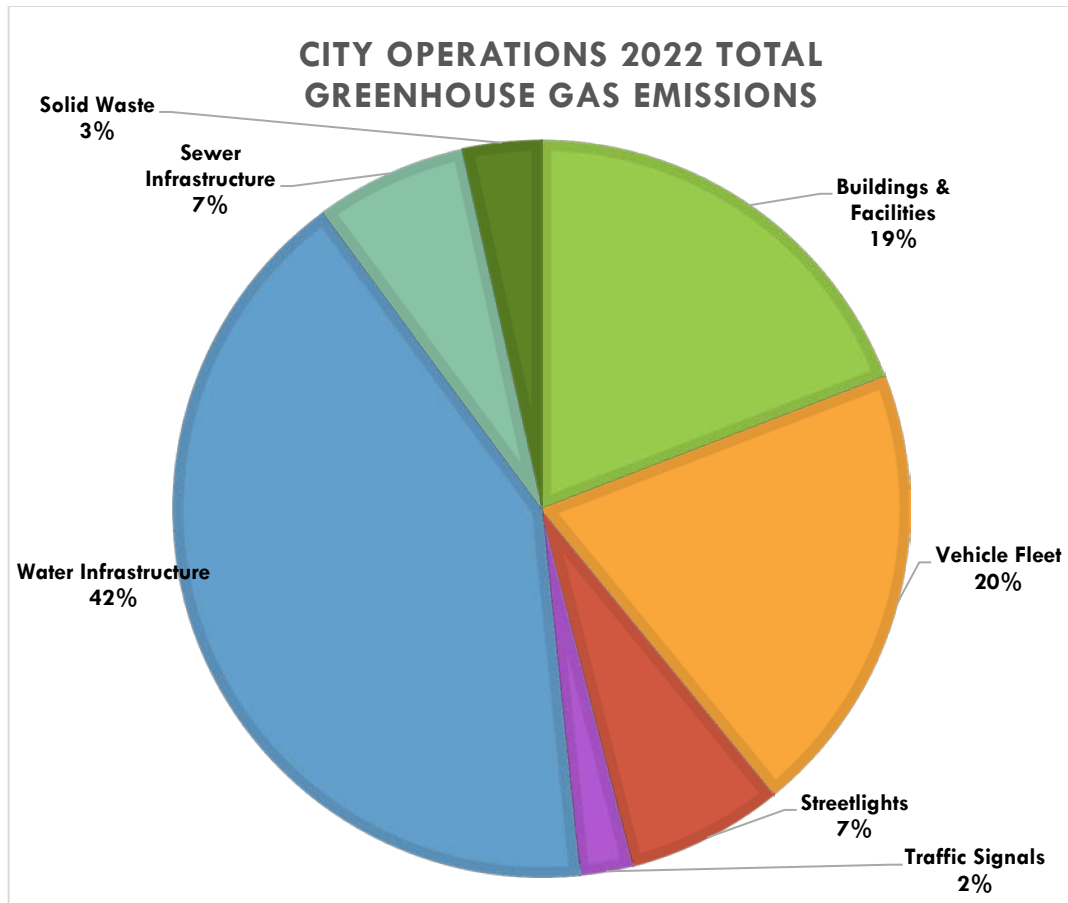


Figure 1. Sources of City GHG Emissions in 2022

Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan implementation

In 2021 the City Council accepted the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan (TCMP). The TCMP includes seventy-two actions the City and regional partners can take to achieve the regionally accepted greenhouse gas reduction targets of 45% reduction by 2030 and 85% reduction by 2050 (compared to 2015 baseline).

The Thurston Regional Planning Council produced the [2022 Annual Report](#) on Regional Implementation which details which actions the City of Tumwater has taken to date. A selection of those implementation actions by the City of Tumwater taken in 2022 include:

- Hired a Sustainability Coordinator;
- Started the process of SolSmart designation;
- Installed ten solar panels at two water infrastructure sites;
- Replaced 900+ light fixtures at the Tumwater Timberland Library with LEDs;

- Signed an agreement with the Department of Enterprise Services to begin an Energy & Water Audit at City facilities;
- Kicked off the public process to revise urban forest-related codes; and
- Began the process of doing a Fleet Electrification Assessment.

City Fleet

Most City vehicles use gasoline or diesel fuel. In 2022, vehicles used 64,097 gallons of gasoline and 17,911 gallons of diesel. Figures 2 and 3 show the percentage of fuel consumed by each department. Between the 2019 baseline and 2022, there was a 9% decrease in fuel consumption (gasoline and diesel combined).

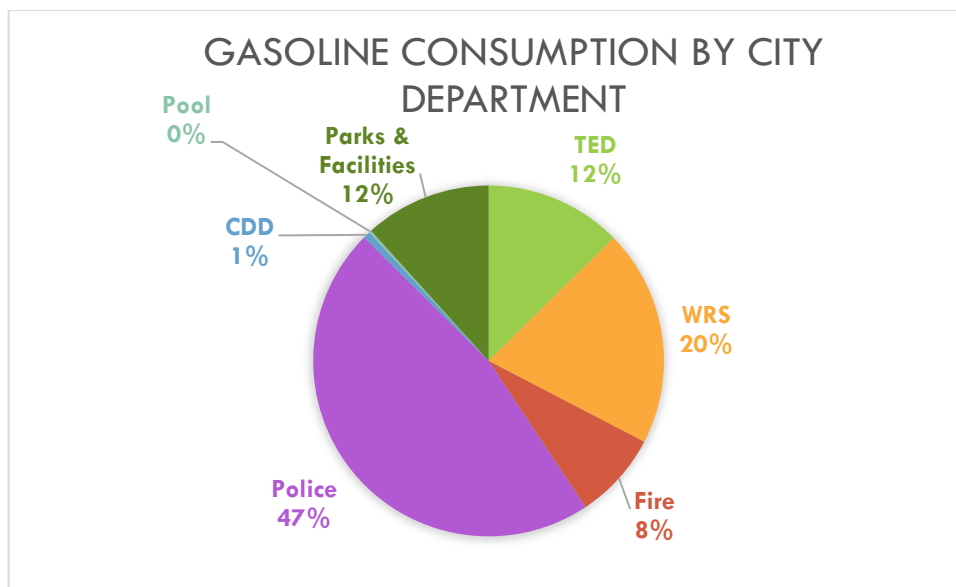


Figure 2. Gasoline Consumption by City Departments in 2022

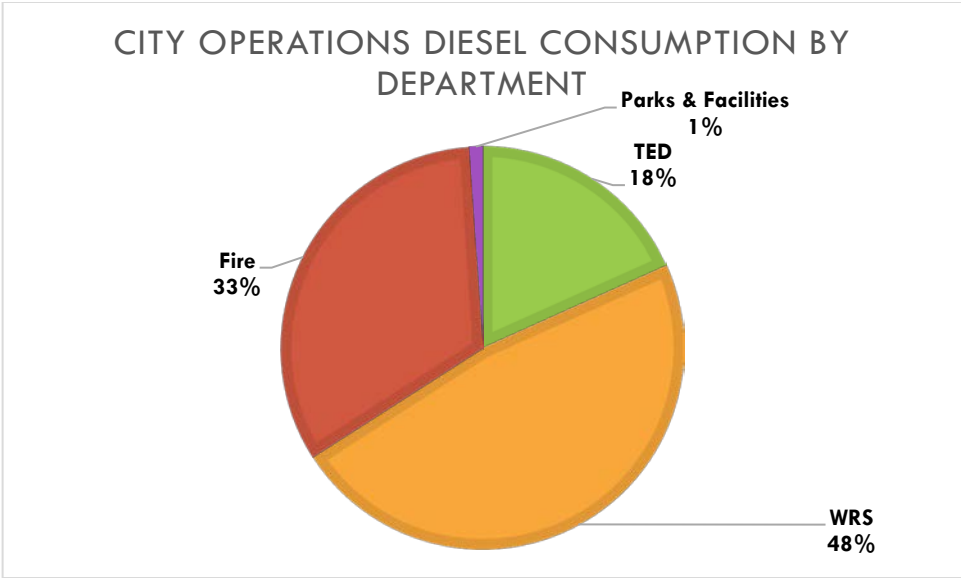


Figure 3. Diesel Consumption by City departments in 2022

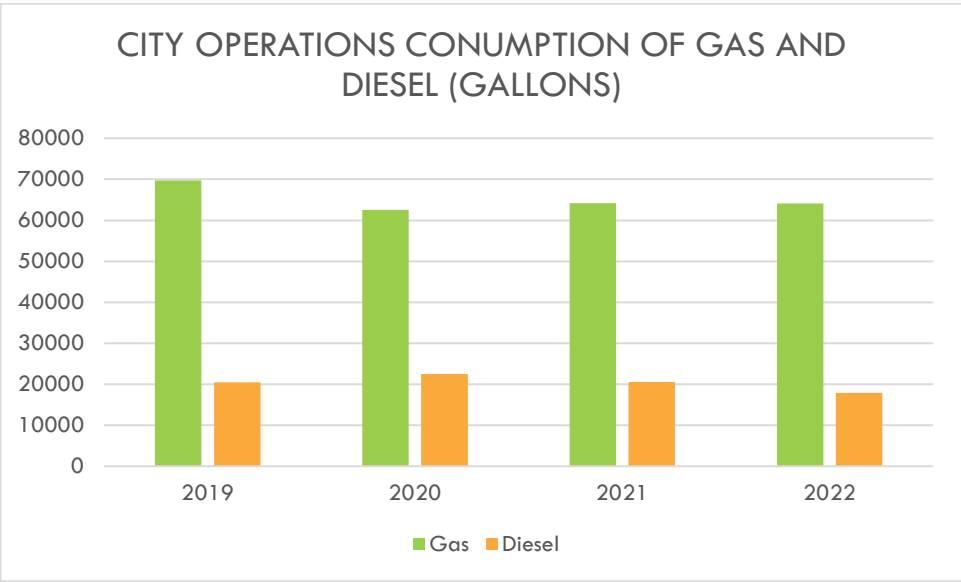


Figure 4. City operations consumption of Gas & Diesel since 2019

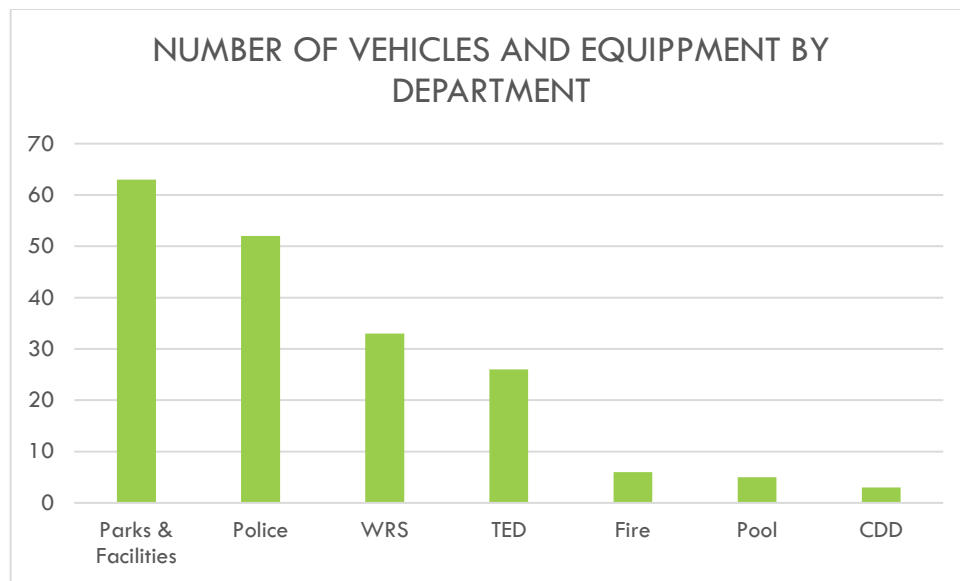


Figure 5. Number of vehicles and equipment by Department

The City has taken steps to increase the number of electric vehicles in the fleet and functions under an “EV or Hybrid First” purchase method for replacement and new vehicles. As of 2022 the City currently has one (1) battery-electric vehicle, fourteen (14) hybrids (both plug-in and non-plug-in hybrids), 121 gasoline-powered vehicles, and thirty-two diesel-powered vehicles in use. In 2022 the City ordered 10 Ford F-150 Lightning Electric Trucks; however, they have not been delivered yet due to manufacturer delays.

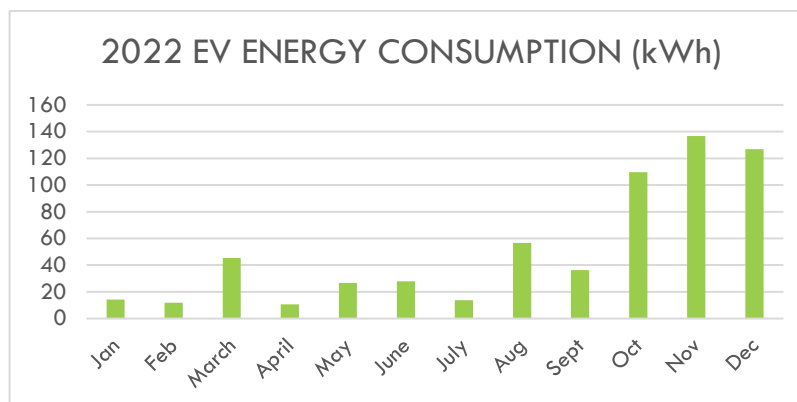


Figure 6. Electric Vehicle Energy Consumption for 2022.

In 2022 the City had a total of eight (8) Level 2 Electric Vehicle Charge ports to support the fleet Electric and Plug-In Hybrid vehicles. Figure 6 shows the Energy Consumption of those chargers throughout 2022. All energy used to charge the City Electric and Plug-In Hybrids is enrolled in PSE’s Green Direct Program.

In 2022 City utilization of electricity at the chargers nearly doubled compared to 2021. The utilization of 616.61 kWh to charge the electrified fleet vehicles avoided the combustion of 130.45 gallons of fuel and an estimated 1.2 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions.

Vehicle Type	2019 Baseline	2022
% of gas-fueled vehicles	85%	72%
% of diesel-fueled vehicles	9%	19%
% of hybrid vehicles	5%	8%
% of electric vehicles	1%	1%

Table 1. Percentage of Vehicle Types 2019 baseline compared to 2022

City staff have also made progress in reducing fuel consumption by passing an Anti-Idle Policy for fleet vehicles and continuing the process to phase out two-stroke motors used in City equipment.

Buildings

Natural Gas

Natural gas is a fossil fuel that emits greenhouse gases including methane during its combustion and production. In 2022, the City consumed 33,202 therms of natural gas. Most of the natural gas was used in City Hall, Fire Stations, and the Operations building (Figure 7). Between the 2019 baseline year and 2022 there was a ~7% increase in emissions because of natural gas consumption. 2022 was a colder year than 2015 with 19% more heating degree days¹. In general, natural gas use peaks during the colder winters months to help heat buildings and facilities.

¹ Heating Degree Day (HDD) is a measurement designed to quantify the demand for energy to heat a building. This measure reflects the assumption that when the outside temperature is 65 degrees Fahrenheit, mechanical heating is not necessary for personal comfort.

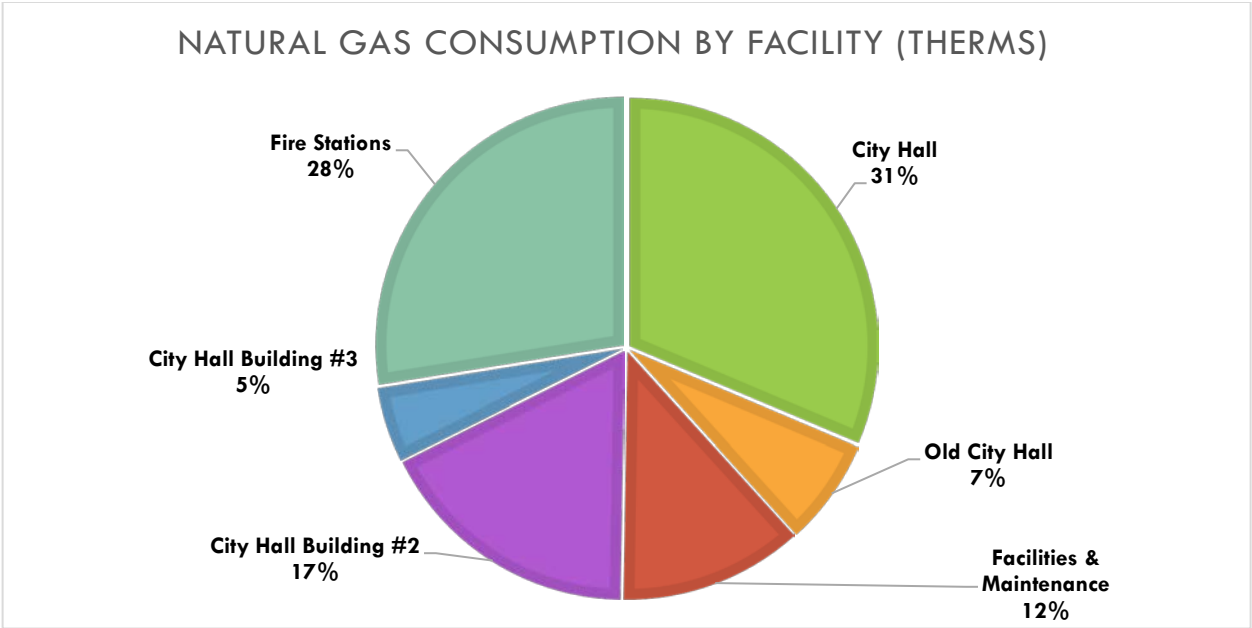


Figure 7. Natural Gas Consumption by Facility in 2022

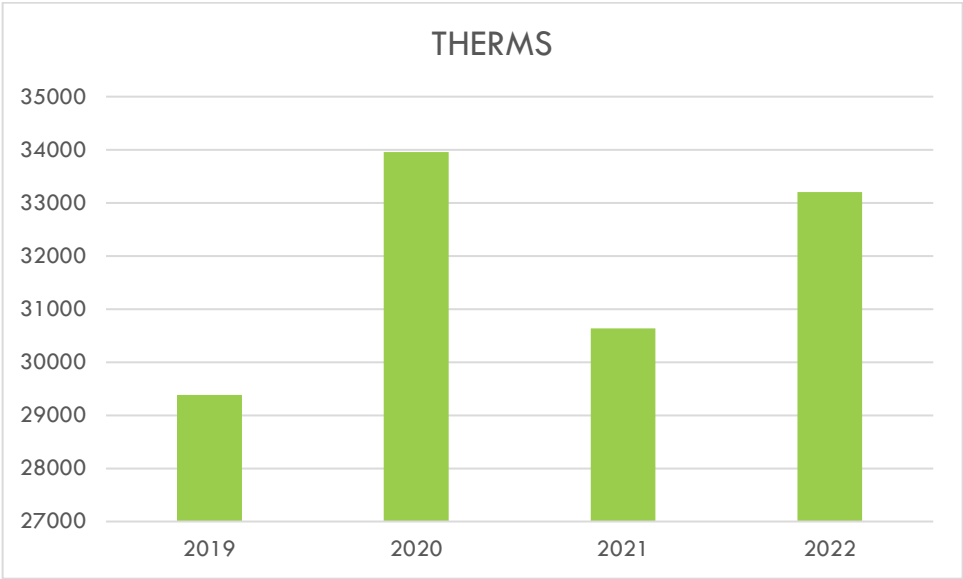


Figure 8. City operations Natural Gas Consumption (therms)

Tumwater City Council has adopted a Strategic Priority for new City buildings to be electric, but there is no established time-based target to reduce City operations natural gas consumption in existing buildings currently.

Electricity

City buildings/facilities used 5,687,286 kWh of electricity in 2022, which equates to a 5.3% increase from the 2019 baseline. Approximately 64% was used for water & wastewater infrastructure, 25% for buildings and facilities, and 11% for streetlights and signals.

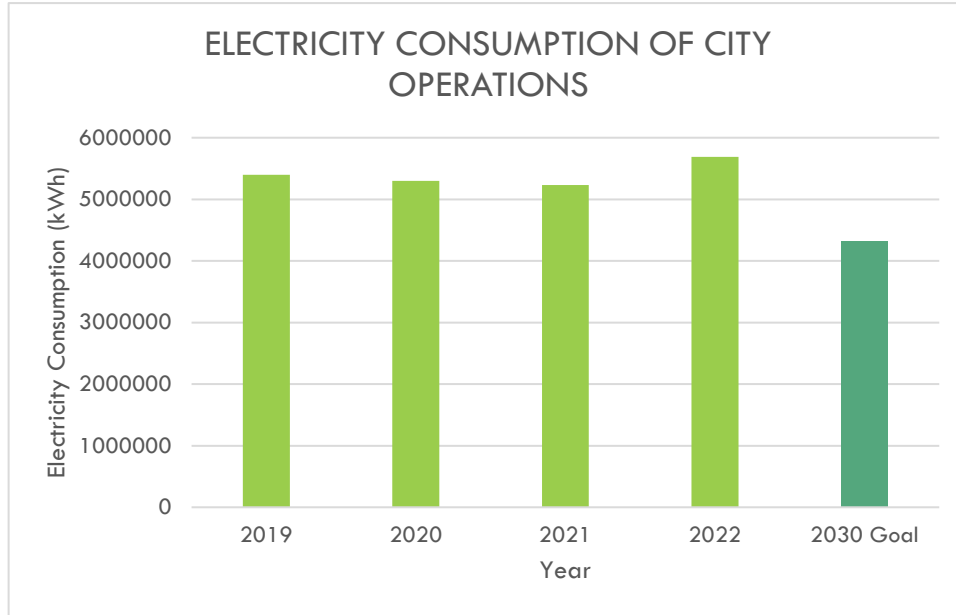


Figure 9. Electricity Consumption of City operations and Goal

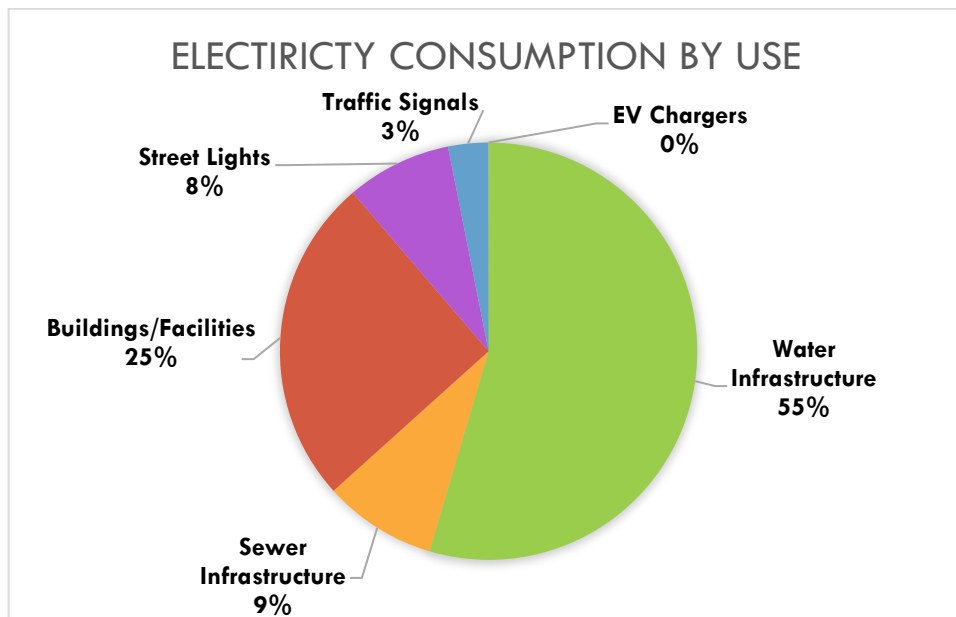


Figure 10. City operations Electricity Consumption by Use

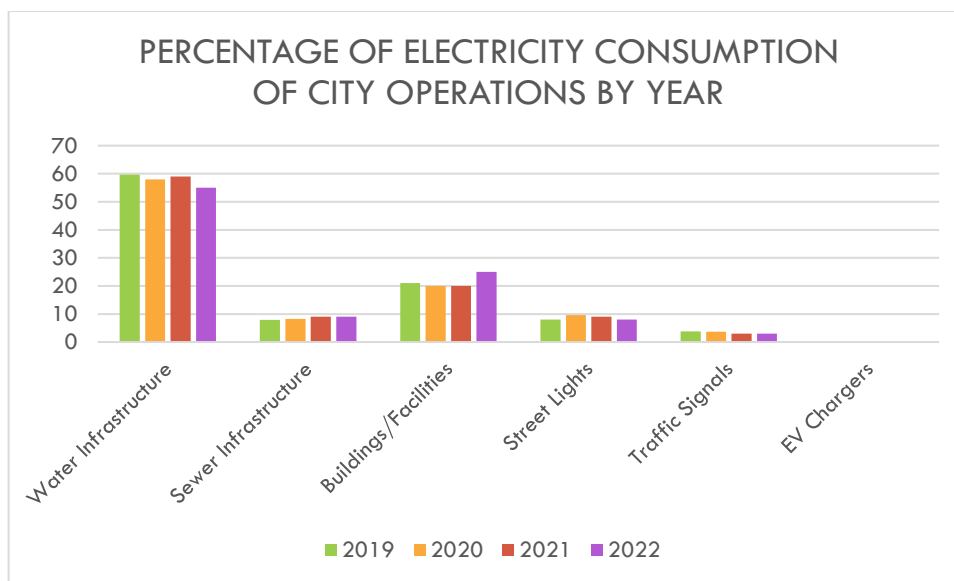


Figure 11. Percentage of electricity consumption of City operations by year

Renewable Energy

In 2022, the solar panels at City Hall produced 21,690 kWh of energy. This accounts for 0.38% of City Hall's 2022 electricity consumption.

In November 2020, the City began receiving electricity from the Skookumchuck Wind Project via Puget Sound Energy's (PSE) Green Power Program. In 2022, the Lund Hill Solar Project was added to PSE's Green Power Program. In 2022 City operations received Renewable Energy Certificates for 5,600 MWh of electricity from Skookumchuck and Lund Hill in 2022, covering 100% of City operations electricity consumption.



Figure 12. Lund Hill Solar Project.
Photo Credit: Iberdrola.

Employee Commute

The City partners with Thurston Regional Planning Council to run the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Program, aimed at incentivizing employees to reduce the number of trips made to and from work each week in single-occupancy vehicles. The CTR program was paused during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022 the City Green Team refreshed the City CTR policy and re-launched the CTR program to staff. The major changes include:

- Removing telework as an incentivized action as it has become a widespread practice.
- Adding walking, biking, and taking the bus as incentivized CTR methods.
- Created an incentive for employees to purchase/lease new/used electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles.

Indoor and Outdoor Water Consumption

In 2022, the City used 21.8 million gallons of water for both indoor/outdoor water use, a 12% decrease from the baseline year. Out of the 21.8 million gallons used by the City in 2021, 11% was used inside City facilities, while the vast majority was used for irrigation in parks, medians, and right of ways.

In 2022, the City used 21.8 million gallons of potable water to irrigate parks, right of ways/medians, and building landscaping. Of the total amount of water used, 46% was used by Parks, while 29% was used to irrigate right of way, and 14% was used for Building landscaping as seen in Figure 13.

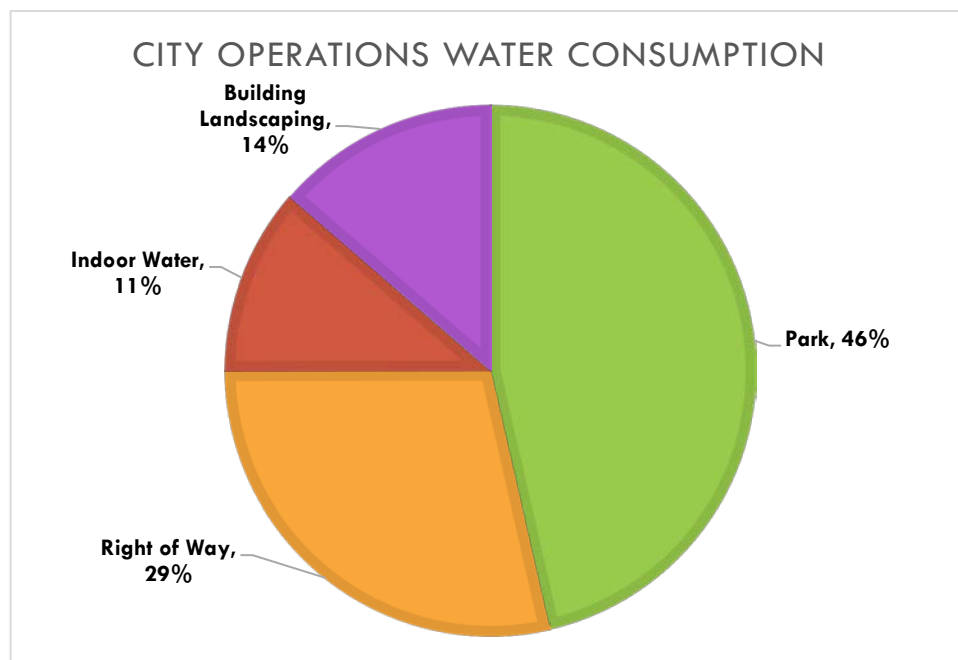


Figure 13. City operations Water Consumption

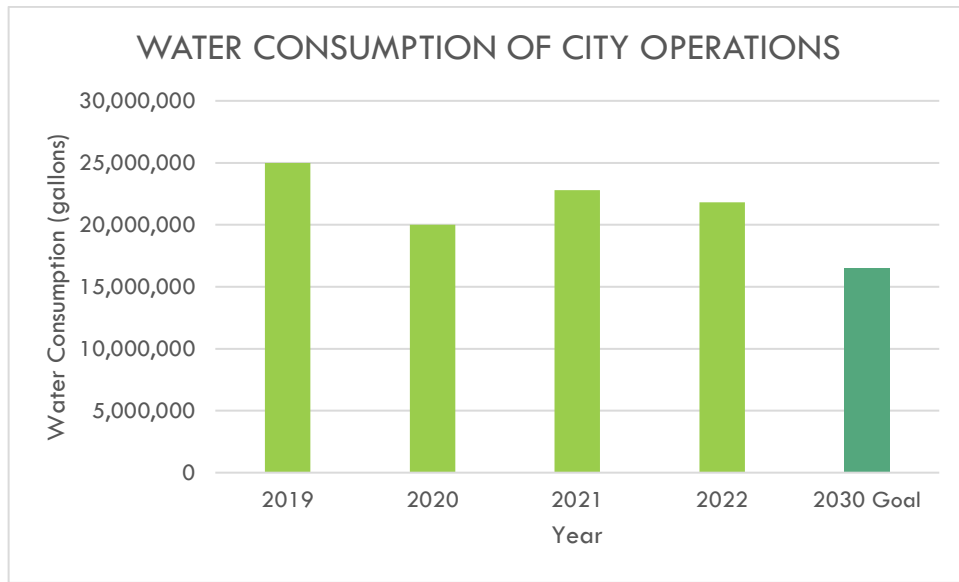


Figure 14. City operations Water Consumption & Goal

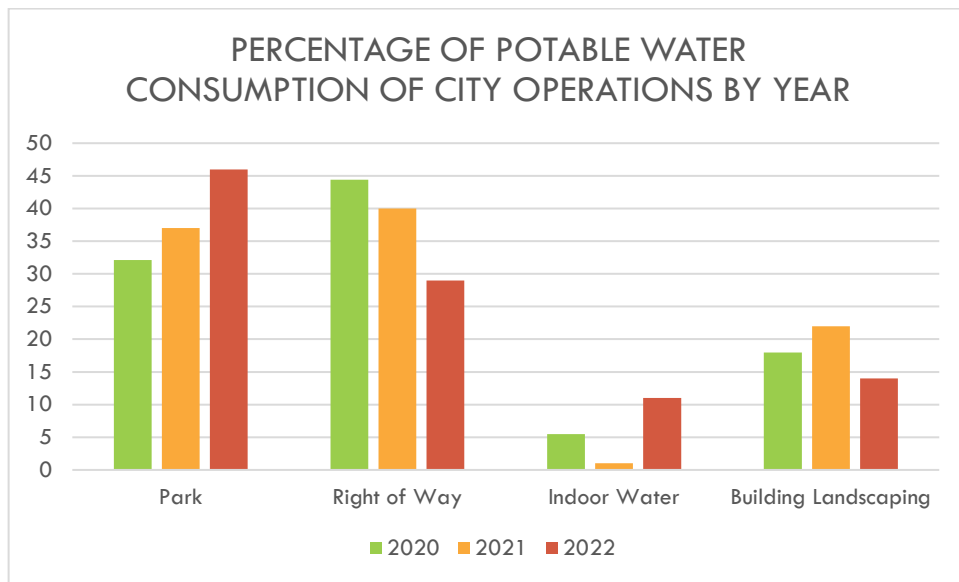


Figure 15. Percentage of potable water consumption of City operations by year

Reclaimed Water

In 2022, the City used 39,666,000 gallons of reclaimed water at the golf course. Use of reclaimed water is a best management practice for water use management at golf courses and is a great use of water that has been used once, cleaned to a high level, and can then be used again.

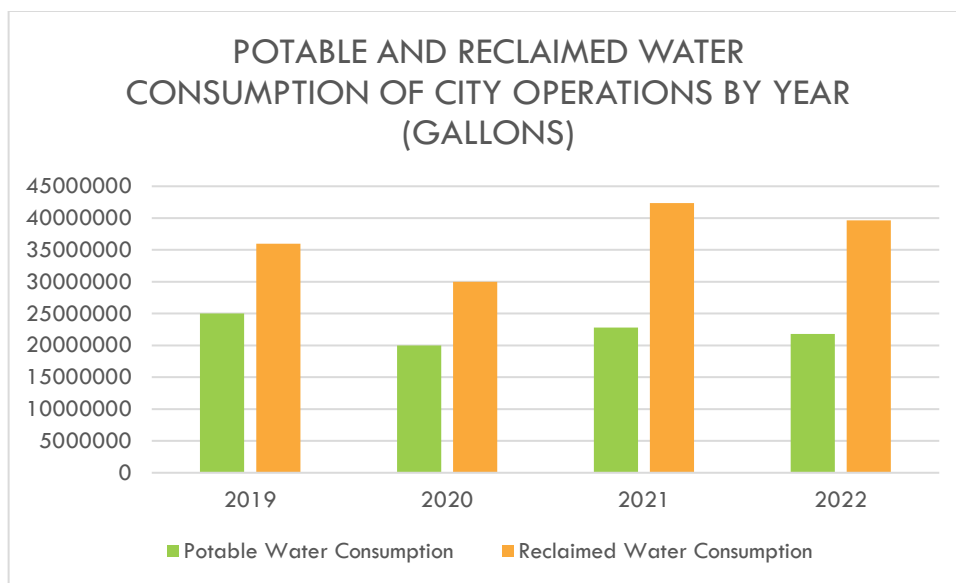


Figure 16. Potable and Reclaimed water consumption of City operations by year (gallons)

Solid Waste

In 2022 City operations produced an estimated 428,169 pounds of solid waste (Figure 17). This value does not include solid waste produced at Parks nor Street Sweeping waste. We are currently recycling or composting 33% of City operations solid waste by weight (Figure 18).

LeMay/Pacific Disposal has provided this estimated amount of waste by type for the calendar year based on container sizes and frequency as pickup for 2021 and 2022.

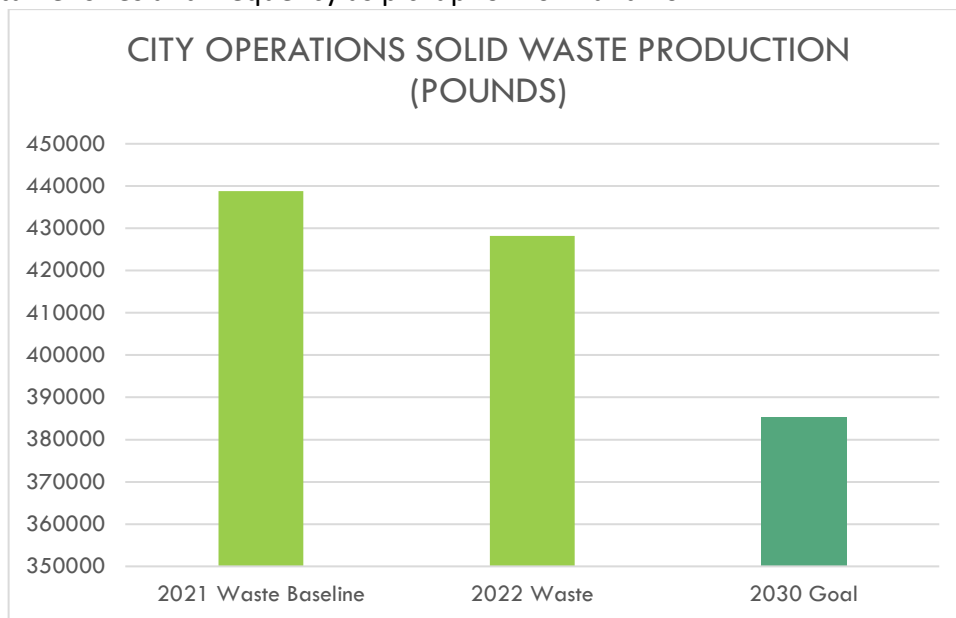


Figure 17. City operations Solid Waste Production

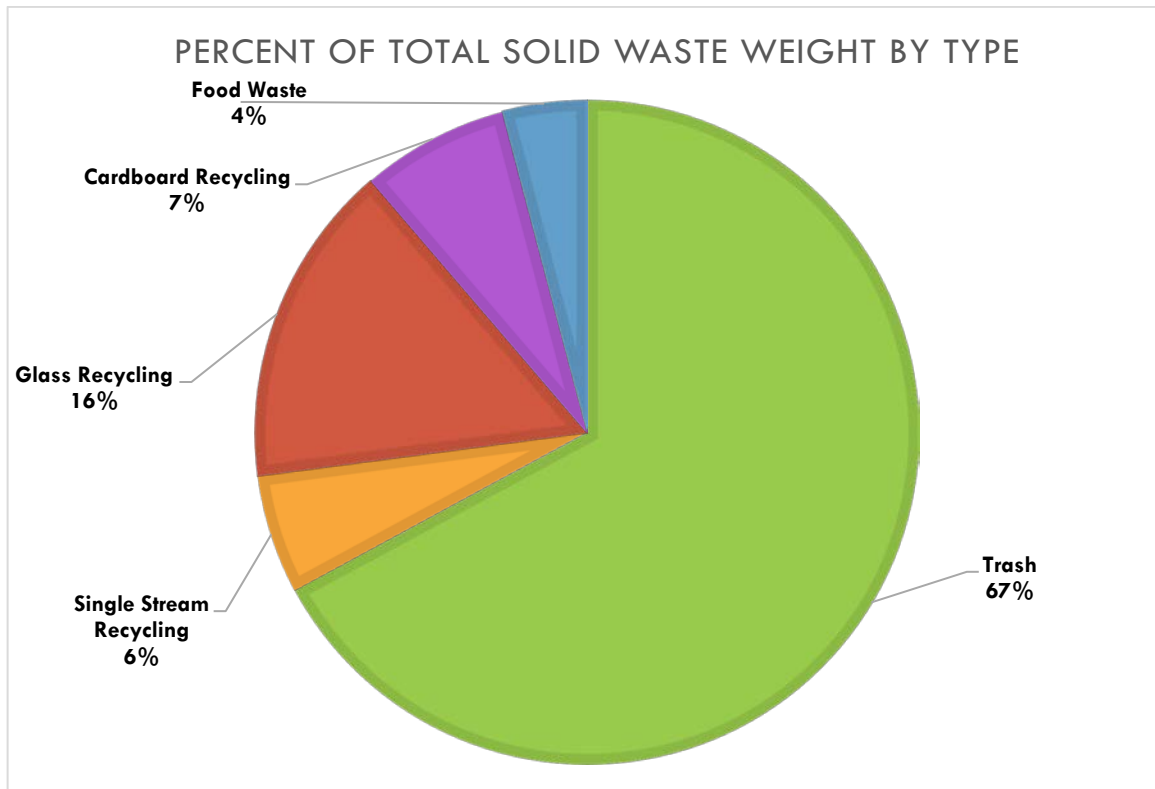


Figure 18. Solid Waste by Type Produced by City operations in 2022

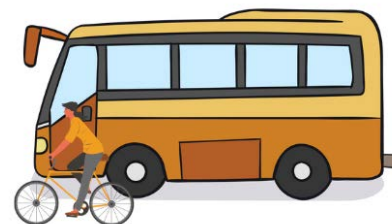
Progress towards goals

1. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions produced by City activities 45% below 2015 levels by 2030: approximately 3% per year. In 2015 the City produced 3,793 metric tons of CO₂e.
 - a. 2015-2022: 3% decrease in total annual emissions from baseline.
 - b. 2015-2022: 71% decrease in net annual emissions from baseline.
2. Increase the percentage of renewable energy being used by City activities and reduce electricity usage 2% per year; or 20% by 2030 from 2019 levels.
 - a. 100% of electricity consumption was offset with Renewable Energy Certificates provided by PSE Green Direct Program.
 - b. 2019-2022: 5.3% increase in electricity usage.



3. Increase employee alternative transportation participation during their commutes to work by 30% by 2030.

- a. The Commute Trip Reduction Policy was revised and re-launched in 2022.



4. Reduce water use 3% per year from City activities from 2019 levels.

- a. 2019-2022: 12% decrease in potable water use.



5. Reduce solid waste (garbage) produced by City activities by 10% by 2030.

- a. 2021-2022: 2.4% decrease in solid waste produced by City Activities.
 - b. In 2022, an estimated 33% of all solid waste by weight was diverted to recycling and composting.



Recommended Next Steps

The following recommendations are intended to help the City continue to make progress on its goals:

- Fund and carry out electrification and efficiency improvements as recommended by the Energy & Water Audit being conducted in 2023;
- Pass a Resolution establishing a commitment to electrifying existing City buildings either by a certain date or as natural gas-powered appliances and machinery reaches the end of their useful life;
- Conduct a formal waste audit of City operations; and
- Continue implementing the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan both regionally and as an individual jurisdiction.

Acknowledgments

This report would not have been possible without the members of the City Green Team:

Dan Smith (Water Resources & Sustainability), Troy Niemeyer (Finance), Ann Cook (Executive), Alyssa Jones Wood (Water Resources & Sustainability), Brad Medrud (Community Development), Brianna Feller (Executive) Carrie Gillum (Water Resources & Sustainability), Todd Anderson (Parks and Recreation), Officer Rosco Rollman (Police), Wes Holmgren (Parks and Recreation), Marc Lavack (Transportation & Engineering), Matt Ames (IT), Erika Smith-Erickson (Community Development), Grant Gilmore (Water Resources & Sustainability), and Shane Brady (Fire).

Additionally, community member and Thurston Climate Action Team volunteer Dave Bradley conducted the City operations GHG inventory referenced in this report.

TO: City Council
 FROM: Alyssa Jones Wood, Sustainability Coordinator
 DATE: September 12, 2023
 SUBJECT: Tumwater Climate Work Program Discussion

1) Recommended Action:

None. This item is an update on the Climate Mitigation Work Program for 2023 and 2024.

2) Background:

The Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan (TCMP) was accepted by the City Council via Resolution R2021-001 on January 19, 2021. The attached Climate Work Program is intended to communicate the climate work that the City of Tumwater plans to undertake both individually and regionally in 2023 and 2024. This work includes the work of various Departments throughout the City and includes many projects that have already received approval from City Council. On June 24, 2023, members of the Thurston Climate Mitigation Collaborative Executive Committee, Community Advisory Workgroup, and Staff Team held a retreat and reached a consensus on one regional climate initiative to prioritize and advance as a region in 2024: the "Home Energy Score and Electrification Campaign." Staff will present this initiative in more detail soon.

In an effort of transparency and to increase public understanding, all four jurisdiction partners of the TCMP utilized the same format for this Work Program and released their Jurisdiction Work Programs to the public together on August 4, 2023.

3) Policy Support:

2023-2024 Strategic Priority: Continue to update and advance the Climate Action Plan.

4) Alternatives:

☐ Request changes to the Tumwater Climate Work Program.

5) Fiscal Notes:

The Climate Work Program outlines \$26,672,959 of investments being made by the City between 2023 and 2024. These investments include projects and programs both specifically defined by the TCMP, and others that are components of the TCMP, such as pedestrian trails and bike lanes. A significant portion of this investment will be funded through federal and state grants.

6) Attachments:

A. Tumwater Climate Work Program



CITY OF TUMWATER

2023-2024 Jurisdiction Work Program

Version Date: September 6, 2023

Staff Contact: Alyssa Jones Wood, Sustainability Coordinator, AJoneswood@ci.Tumwater.wa.us, (360) 754-4140.

Work Program Dates: June 1, 2023 – December 31, 2024

The Jurisdiction Work Program describes activities that are intended to be undertaken by one of the four jurisdictions in the Thurston Climate Mitigation Collaborative to advance the implementation of the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan. The inclusion of a project or initiative in this document does not guarantee that it will be brought to completion during the defined time frame.

Summary Table:

#	Project Name	Sector	TCMP Strategy	Timeline	Budget
1	Home Energy Score Audit and Electrification Campaign Pilot	Buildings & Energy	B1	2024-2027 if funded	\$419,600*
2	LED Lighting	Buildings & Energy	B2	2023-2024	\$35,500
3	All-Electric Buildings Webpage	Buildings & Energy	B3	2023	N/A
4	State Building Code Updates	Buildings & Energy	B4	Complete by October 2023	N/A
5	SolSmart Designation	Buildings & Energy	B5	Submit in August 2023	N/A
6	Solar + Storage Feasibility Assessment	Buildings & Energy	B5	Completion by July 2024 if funded	\$29,800*
7	Comprehensive Plan Period Update	Buildings & Energy	T1	Completion by June 30, 2025	TBD
8	TCMP Related Development Code Amendments	Transportation & Land Use	T1	2024	TBD
9	Traffic Signal Controller & Detection Upgrade	Transportation & Land Use	T2	Design 2023 Installation 2024	\$268,150

#	Project Name	Sector	TCMP Strategy	Timeline	Budget
10	I-5/Trospen Road/Capitol Blvd Reconfiguration	Transportation & Land Use	T2	Completion in 2024	\$12,000,000
11	X Street Roundabout	Transportation & Land Use	T2	Construction 2024-2025	\$2,010,000
12	Fleet Electrification Plan	Transportation & Land Use	T3	January 2024	N/A
13	Solar-Powered Off-Grid EV Charger at Pioneer Park	Transportation & Land Use	T3	36 months after the award, if awarded	\$100,199*
14	Energy Code Adoption	Transportation & Land Use	T3	October 2023	N/A
15	Linwood Avenue Sidewalk, Sustina Lane to 2 nd Ave	Transportation & Land Use	T5	Design 2023 Construction 2024	\$760,000
16	Tumwater Hill Neighborhood Park Trail Improvements	Transportation & Land Use	T5	August 2023	\$30,000
17	Deschutes Valley Trail – E Street	Transportation & Land Use	T5	September 2023	TBD
18	Palermo Wellfield Trail	Transportation & Land Use	T5	Fall 2023	\$500,000
19	2 nd Avenue Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements	Transportation & Land Use	T5	Design 2024 Construction 2025	\$3,605,000
20	Israel Road and Linderson Way Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements	Transportation & Land Use	T5	Design 2023 Construction 2024	\$1,985,000
21	2024 Pavement Maintenance Project	Transportation & Land Use	T5	Design 2023 Construction 2024	\$3,857,857
22	Multimodal Improvements and Traffic Calming Program	Transportation & Land Use	T5	Construction 2024 (ongoing until 2029)	\$380,000
23	Water Audit	Waste & Water	W2	2023	\$42,863

#	Project Name	Sector	TCMP Strategy	Timeline	Budget
24	Recycling and Composting at City Events	Waste & Water	W4	Ongoing	\$500
25	Composting at City Facilities	Waste & Water	W4	Ongoing	\$9,700 per year
26	Compost Procurement Ordinance Implementation	Waste & Water	W4	Ongoing	N/A
27	Tree and Vegetation Protection Ordinance Update	Agriculture, Forests, and Prairies	A5/A6/A7	Winter 2024	\$92,421.76
28	Street Tree Standards Update	Agriculture, Forests, and Prairies	A5/A6/A7	Winter 2024	\$83,200
29	Landscaping and Buffering Requirements	Agriculture, Forests, and Prairies	A5/A6/A7	Winter 2024	\$48,468.82
30	Tumwater Public Urban Forest Inventory	Agriculture, Forests, and Prairies	A5/A6/A7	May 2024	\$60,000
31	Habitat Conservation Program	Agriculture, Forests, and Prairies	A5/A6/A7	Underway since 2016, approval date not known	\$345,000
32	Tumwater Sustainability Webpage	Cross-Cutting	G1	Ongoing	N/A
33	Student Internships and Guest lectures	Cross-Cutting	G1	Ongoing	N/A
34	Legislative Agenda	Cross-Cutting	G1	Ongoing	N/A

*Pending Grant Funding

Buildings and Energy Sector

Strategy B1. Reduce energy use in existing residential buildings.

1. Project Name: Home Energy Score Audit and Electrification Campaign Pilot

City Department(s): Water Resources and Sustainability (WRS)

Anticipated Timeline: 2024 through 2027 if grant funding is awarded.

Budget (if applicable): This project is contingent upon grant funding. The requested grant budget is \$419,600.

Project Description: At the 2023 Thurston Climate Mitigation Collaborative retreat, this was the one regional initiative for jurisdiction staff to advance in 2024. Other regional partners will pool funds to carry out this initiative. For Tumwater, this initiative will include:

- Developing a regional model Ordinance requiring Home Energy Score Audits and score disclosure at the time of listing real estate;
- Coordinating negotiated-rate Home Energy Score Audits community-wide including paying for sixty audits for Low- and Moderate-income households;
- Paying for up to \$10,000 of home efficiency and electrification upgrades for 24 Low- and Moderate-income households;
- Funding a limited number of home efficiency and electrification upgrade incentives for residents who are not Low- or Moderate-income households;
- Coordinating for telephone, email, and website-based technical assistance for all residents to inquire about home electrification and available incentives, and;
- Hosting a workshop about how to become a Home Energy Score Certified Assessor.

Strategy B2. Reduce energy use in existing commercial/industrial buildings.

2. Project Name: LED Lighting

TCMP Action: B2.3 LED Lighting

City Department(s): Parks and Recreation

Anticipated Timeline: 2023-2024

Budget: \$35,500

Project Description: Parks and Recreation Facilities staff will perform LED lighting upgrades at City Hall.

Strategy B3. Reduce energy use across building types.

3. Project Name: All-Electric Buildings Webpage

TCMP Action: B3.1 Energy Education

City Department(s): WRS and Communications

Anticipated Timeline: This webpage was launched in July 2023

Budget: N/A

Project Description: Develop and launch a website with educational resources on all aspects of energy-efficient all-electric buildings including available incentives.

Strategy B4. Reduce energy use in new construction or redevelopment.

4. Project Name: State Building Code Updates

City Department(s): Community Development

Anticipated Timeline: complete by October 2023

Budget: N/A

Project Description: Adopting the new State Building Code updates.

Strategy B5. Increase the production of local renewable energy.

5. Project Name: SolSmart Designation

TCMP Action: B5.5 SolSmart

City Department(s): WRS and Community Development

Anticipated Timeline: Goal to submit for designation in August 2023

Budget: N/A

Project Description: SolSmart is a national technical assistance and designation program funded by U.S. Department of Energy. Recognizes cities and counties that take steps to address local barriers to solar energy and foster the growth of mature local solar markets. The focus of the program is on reducing “soft costs,” which refers to all non-hardware costs of solar energy systems, such as planning & zoning, permitting, inspection, installation, financing, and customer acquisition. The City of Tumwater is currently aiming for the designation of SolSmart Silver.

6. Project Name: Solar + Storage Feasibility Assessment

TCMP Action: B5.3 Public Building Solar

City Department(s): WRS and Parks and Recreation

Anticipated Timeline: Completion by July 2024 if funding is awarded.

Budget: This project is contingent on grant funding. The budget is \$14,900 per site for a total of \$29,800.

Project Description: Completing site assessments, community engagement, feasibility assessments, and preliminary design of combined solar and storage at the Tumwater Timberland Library and Tumwater City Hall.

Strategy B6. Convert to cleaner fuel sources.

No current projects

Transportation and Land Use Sector

Strategy T1. Set land use policies that support increased urban density and efficient transportation networks and reduce urban sprawl.

7. Project Name: Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update

City Department(s): Community Development

Anticipated Timeline: Completion by June 30, 2025

Budget (if applicable): TBD

Project Description: Prepare the required ten-year periodic update to the City's Comprehensive Plan, including updates to the Conservation, Housing, Land Use for Public Purposes, and Utilities Elements as well as the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan, Economic Development Plan, and Transportation Plan. Includes incorporation of climate mitigation required elements passed by the state legislature in 2023.

8. Project Name: Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan – Related Development Code Amendments

City Department(s): Community Development and WRS

Anticipated Timeline: 2024

Budget (if applicable): TBD

Project Description: Associated updates to development regulations.

Strategy T2. Increase efficiency of the transportation system.

9. Project Name: Traffic Signal Controller & Detection Upgrade

City Department(s): Transportation and Engineering (TED)

External Partners: Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program funded.

Anticipated Timeline: design 2023, installation 2024

Budget: \$268,150

Project Description: This project will replace the controllers and necessary associated hardware at eight intersections and will upgrade the detection equipment to current standard cameras at six intersections throughout Tumwater.

10. Project Name: I-5 / Trosper Road / Capitol Boulevard Reconfiguration

City Department(s): TED

External Partners: Washington State Department of Transportation

Anticipated Timeline: currently in construction, expected completion in 2024.

Budget: \$12,000,000

Project Description: Realign northbound Interstate 5 on/off ramp, construct new extension of 6th Avenue between Trosper Road and Lee Street, and construct three roundabouts. This project will improve traffic flow and will also improve bike and pedestrian facilities at the intersection.

11. Project Name: X Street Roundabout

City Department(s): TED

Anticipated Timeline: construction 2024 and 2025

Budget: \$1,738,650 Grant Funded + \$271,350 = \$2,010,000 (2024)

Project Description: Construction of a roundabout at the intersection of Capitol Boulevard and X Street.

Strategy T3. Increase adoption of electric vehicles.

12. Project Name: Fleet Electrification Plan

TCMP Action: T3.10 Zero Emission Fleets

City Department(s): WRS and TED

Anticipated Timeline: Complete by January 2024

Budget: N/A

Project Description: Use the Electrification Coalition's DRVE tool to assess and plan for fleet electrification.

13. Project Name: Solar-Powered Off-Grid EV Charger at Pioneer Park

City Department(s): WRS and Parks and Recreation

Anticipated Timeline: Within 36 months of the grant award, if funded.

Budget: This project is contingent on grant funding. \$91,090 grant funding + \$9,109 cash match = \$100,199

Project Description: Purchasing and deploying an off-grid solar-powered EV charger at Pioneer Park. This project will include outreach and public meetings to ensure the charger and solar unit are installed in a way that meets accessibility and community needs.

14. Project Name: Energy Code Adoption

TCMP Action: T3.1 EV Parking New Construction

City Department(s): Community Development

Anticipated Timeline: Adopted by October 2023

Budget: N/A

Project Description: Adopting the new Energy Code including EV charging, ready, and capable requirements in new development.

Strategy T4. Increase the use of public transit.

No current projects

Strategy T5. Increase use of active forms of travel and more efficient commute modes.

15. Project Name: Linwood Avenue Sidewalk, Sustina Lane to 2nd Avenue

City Department(s): TED

Anticipated Timeline: Design 2023, construction 2024

Budget: \$760,000

Project Description: Sidewalk infill and traffic calming on school walking routes in the vicinity of Michael T. Simmons Elementary School, in addition to pedestrian and vehicular safety improvements at the intersections of Linwood Avenue with 2nd Avenue and Lake Park Drive.

16. Project Name: Tumwater Hill Neighborhood Park Trail Improvements

City Department(s): Parks and Recreation

Anticipated Timeline: August 2023

Budget (if applicable): \$30,000

Project Description: Improvements to the existing trail system to include a new stairway at Ridgeview Loop trailhead, widening the path to the original design, improving trail surfacing, and drainage.

17. Project Name: Deschutes Valley Trail – E Street

City Department(s): Parks and Recreation

Anticipated Timeline: Late Summer 2023

Budget: Unknown

Project Description: This small section of the Deschutes Valley Trail will start at E Street and follow Tumwater Valley Drive to the end of the Craft District. The project is being constructed, per our design, by the Craft District as part of our partnership with them for the overall development.

18. Project Name: Palermo Wellfield Trail

City Department(s): Parks and Recreation

Anticipated Timeline: Summer/Fall 2023

Budget: \$500,000

Project Description: There has been an informal trail from the Palermo neighborhood to Capital Blvd for decades. The trail and improvement were included in the planning of the Deschutes Valley Trail and will serve as a trail spur/connection to the main trail through Tumwater Valley. The City had a parking lot at the trailhead near Capitol Blvd, but that was removed for the current street improvement project. A new parking lot is being constructed for the new trailhead. The wellfield has seen unwanted activity in recent years due, in part, to its remote location and proximity to local traffic/businesses. The City Council has agreed that formalizing the trail system will bring more activity and use to the area which may discourage unwanted behavior. The trail will also provide a safer and more useful pedestrian route from Tumwater Valley to Capitol Blvd.

19. Project Name: 2nd Avenue Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements

City Department(s): TED

Anticipated Timeline: Design 2024, construction 2025

Budget: \$3,605,000

Project Description: Intersection improvements at 2nd Avenue and Linwood. Sidewalk, bulb-outs, curb ramps, paving, bike lanes on 2nd Street from Linwood to B Street.

20. Project Name: Israel Road and Linderson Way Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements

City Department(s): TED

Anticipated Timeline: design 2023, construction 2024

Budget: \$1,985,000

Project Description: Roadway and multi-modal improvements at the intersection of Israel Road and Linderson Way including the construction of refuge island(s), reconstruction of select sidewalk segments, and curb ramps, add bike lanes, signal improvements, roadway, and other improvements.

21. Project Name: 2024 Pavement Maintenance Project

City Department(s): TED

Anticipated Timeline: Design 2023, construction 2024

Budget: \$3,857,857

Project Description: This city-wide project is funded by the Transportation Benefit District (TBD) to maintain and preserve city streets. It includes asphalt overlays, repainting pavement, replacing raised pavement markers, and other site-specific pavement repairs. This project triggers an ADA requirement to bring relevant curb ramps into compliance with federal standards.

22. Project Name: Multimodal Improvements and Traffic Calming Program

City Department(s): TED

Anticipated Timeline: Construction is ongoing from 2024 to 2029. The budget for 2024 only is included.

Budget: \$380,000 (2024)

Project Description: Construction of miscellaneous multimodal and traffic calming improvements throughout the City. Work could include sidewalk maintenance, repair, infill, ADA curb ramps, pedestrian crossings and connections, bicycle improvements, and neighborhood traffic calming. Identified projects include: all deficiencies in right-of-way contained within the City ADA Transition Plan, extension of sidewalk on Trosper Road to Lambskin Street, widen sidewalk on 2nd Avenue from Custer Way to Destoto Street, and annual Sidewalk Program.

Water and Waste Sector

Strategy W1/W2/W3. Increase the efficiency of water and wastewater infrastructure/Reduce water consumption/Reduce emissions from wastewater treatment operations.

23. Project Name: Water Audit

TCMP Action: W2.2 Water Audits

City Department(s): WRS

Anticipated Timeline: 2023

Budget (if applicable): \$42,863

Project Description: The City entered an Energy Savings Performance Contract with the Department of Enterprise Services in July 2022 for an Investment Grade Audit of City Facilities. As of June 2023, we have received the Investment Grade Audit (IGA) proposal from the Energy Services Company, and we are moving forward with the audit. More budget for the construction of energy and water efficiency measures will need to be allocated after the completion of the IGA.

Strategy W4. Divert more solid waste from landfills.

24. Project Name: Recycling and Composting at City Events

City Department(s): WRS in coordination with Parks & Recreation

Anticipated Timeline: Ongoing

Budget (if applicable): \$500

Project Description: When volunteers are available, the City diverts recyclables and compostable materials away from landfills at City events where food trucks are present. The City has developed a volunteer position for “Recycling and Compost Attendants” and continuously recruits volunteers to stand beside the waste stations at events to provide education and assistance to eventgoers in properly disposing of their waste.

25. Project Name: Composting at City Facilities

City Department(s): WRS and Parks and Recreation

Anticipated Timeline: Launched in April 2023, ongoing.

Budget (if applicable): \$9,000 for additional janitorial services + \$700 for food and yard waste collection services = \$9,700 per year.

Project Description: Distributing receptacles and education to City staff to divert their organic waste into green buckets for composting. The program started with 2 96-gallon food and yard waste collection totes but within 2 months the collection capacity needed to be doubled to keep up with rates of diversion.

26. Project Name: Compost Procurement Ordinance Implementation

City Department(s): WRS

Anticipated Timeline: ongoing

Budget (if applicable): N/A

Project Description: Implementation and oversight of the City Compost Procurement Ordinance which requires that landscaping, construction and post-construction, erosion control, and green infrastructure projects purchase and utilize compost in the maximum amount feasible. Reporting compost purchase, weight, and source data to the Department of Ecology as required by HB 1799.

Agriculture, Forests, and Prairies Sector

Strategy A1/A2. Reduce emissions from agricultural practices/Support agricultural practices that sequester carbon.

No current projects

Strategy A5/A6/A7. Preserve tree canopy and manage forests and prairies to sequester carbon.

27. Project Name: Tree and Vegetation Protection Ordinance Update

TCMP Action A6.9 Tree Canopy Preservation

City Department(s): Community Development and WRS

External Partners (if applicable): Various stakeholders

Anticipated Timeline: Winter 2024

Budget (if applicable): \$92,421.76

Project Description: Complete update of the City Tree and Vegetation Preservation regulations (TMC 16.08).

28. Project Name: Street Tree Standards Update

City Department(s): Community Development and WRS

Anticipated Timeline: Winter 2024

Budget (if applicable): \$25,000 Grant + \$58,200 City Funds = \$83,200

Project Description: Complete update of the City Street Tree Plan and Street Tree regulation (TMC 12.24).

29. Project Name: Landscaping and Buffering Requirements

City Department(s): Community Development and WRS

Anticipated Timeline: Winter 2024

Budget (if applicable): \$48,468.82

Project Description: Complete update to landscaping buffering and screening regulations (TMC 18.47).

30. Project Name: Tumwater Public Urban Forest Inventory

TCMP Action: A6.5 Municipal Canopy

City Department(s): WRS

Anticipated Timeline: Complete by May 2024

Budget (if applicable): \$40,000 grant + \$20,000 match = \$60,000.

Project Description: Updating the City 2018 Street Tree Inventory to meet Department of Natural Resource Inventory requirements, completing an on-the-ground or sample-based tree inventory all City-owned properties, completing an iTree analysis of the City-owned urban forest, producing a maintenance plan including cost estimates, and identifying potential planting areas to expand Tumwater's tree canopy more equitably. Funds for this project were provided by the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program, administered through the State of Washington Department of Natural Resources Urban and Community Forestry Program. The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

31. Project Name: Habitat Conservation Program (HCP)

County Department(s): Community Development

External Partners (if applicable): U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Anticipated Timeline: Underway since 2016, approval date not known.

Budget (if applicable): \$310,000 grant funds + \$35,000 City funds = \$345,000

Project Description: Preparation of a USFWS approved Habitat Conservation Plan for three threatened or endangered prairie species and one Black Lake drainage species. Protection of prairie species will result in the protection of over 1,500 acres of native prairie habitat.

Cross-Cutting Sector

Strategy G1. Conduct education and outreach across climate mitigation areas.

32. Project Name: Tumwater Sustainability Webpage

City Department(s): WRS and Communications

Anticipated Timeline: ongoing

Budget (if applicable): N/A

Project Description: Develop and expand the City of Tumwater Sustainability and Climate Mitigation webpages. The site's goal is to be a hub for information about all Tumwater climate initiatives and will be continually updated to include related projects and programs that are being implemented across multiple City departments.

33. Project Name: Student Internships and Guest Lectures

City Department(s): WRS

Anticipated Timeline: ongoing

Budget (if applicable): N/A

Project Description: Work with local higher education institutions, most recently the Evergreen State College, to supervise student interns in conducting research projects to boost staff capacity.

Strategy G4. Enhance monitoring and evaluation of climate mitigation measures and outcomes.

No current projects.

Strategy G5. Advocate for climate-mitigating state and federal policy.

34. Project Name: Legislative Agenda

City Department(s): Executive

Anticipated Timeline: Ongoing

Project Description: Creating a Legislative Agenda and using a consultant to lobby on behalf of those items included on the Legislative Agenda.