



PlanSpokane

Neighborhood Council Climate Workshops Summary

Climate Planning Early Engagement

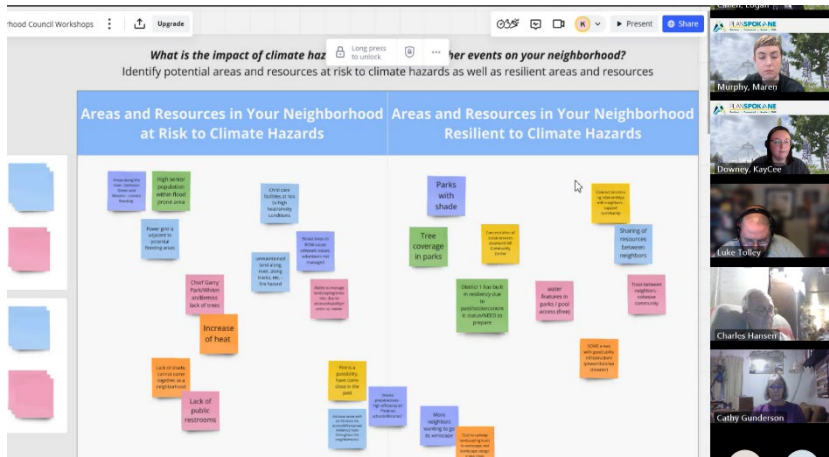
December 2024



PLAN **SPOKANE**

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The City of Spokane is embarking on a transformative journey to address the pressing challenges posed by increasing climate hazards and extreme weather events. As part of this effort, the City is undertaking a major update to our Comprehensive Plan, a foundational document guiding the city's growth and development. This update, mandated by the Washington State Growth Management Act and due in 2026, presents a unique opportunity to integrate climate considerations into every aspect of our city's future.



As one of the first engagement opportunities of the Climate Planning efforts, City staff held virtual workshops at the end of December 2024 to hear from our Neighborhood Councils about how climate pressures are affecting their residents. In these workshops, one for each Council District for a total of three meetings, staff presented information about the Periodic Update of the Comprehensive Plan, the goals of Climate Planning, and some data points on how climate may impact individual neighborhoods, before facilitating discussion from participants.

The workshops were recorded for those who were unable to attend the workshops or may want to hear the discussions:

- [District 1 Neighborhood Council Climate Workshop – Dec. 19, 2024](#)
- [District 2 Neighborhood Council Climate Workshop – Dec. 17, 2024](#)
- [District 3 Neighborhood Council Climate Workshop – Dec. 18, 2024](#)

Neighborhood Council Climate Workshops Discussion

The goal of the Neighborhood Council Climate Workshops engagement opportunity was two-fold: provide a primer on the Climate Planning efforts to the Neighborhood Council members and learn from neighborhood-specific lived experiences.

The discussion started with asking the Neighborhood Council representatives to think about what areas and resources are at risk from or resilient to climate hazards. These questions spurred conversations about weaknesses and opportunities of resiliency in their

own neighborhoods and throughout all of Spokane. Below is a summary of what was heard, both during the workshops and from comments submitted afterward.

What is at Risk?

Question 1: what areas and resources are at risk to climate hazards?

A common theme throughout the Workshops was a collective concern around aging or failing trees and their potential to cause damage or injury during weather events. The conflict between these concerns and the acknowledged benefits of tree canopies must be navigated in future discussions.

- *Vulnerability of Trees*
 - Recent windstorms have taken down trees, caused damage to buildings and other property
 - When trees go down, there is little desire to replace the trees due to potential damage
 - Requirements to maintain or replace trees may increase fire risk in some communities
 - Costs to remove trees that are at risk of falling are a burden to many households
 - Many of Spokane's older neighborhoods have or are beginning to reach the end of typical tree life spans
- *Tree and Landscaping Management*
 - There is no incentive to replace trees when they get cut down/trees are being taken down due to fear
 - Chief Garry Park, Whitman, and Bemiss lack tree coverage
 - Lack of knowledge, resources, ability, or comfort with maintaining trees or non-lawn landscaping (disability, age, renter vs. owner, etc.)
 - Lack of shade limits the ability of the community coming together as a neighborhood
 - Unmaintained land along the river and railroad tracks increases fire risk
 - Unmaintained street trees in rights-of-way cause sidewalk issues, volunteer trees are not managed
- *Fire Risk*
 - Fire is a major topic of concern from neighborhood residents
 - Concerns specifically related to the bluff in District 2
 - Fire management: improve egress and reaction to fire hazards
 - Need to address federal management of land to mitigate summer fires
 - Smoke becomes a problem for the whole community

- *Flood Risk*
 - Current flooding risks along the river, particularly between Greene and Mission in District 1
 - There is currently a high senior population within flood prone areas
- *Power Grid*
 - Concerns over the length of time it takes to turn power back on during outages
 - Power grid (Avista headquarters) is adjacent to potential flooding areas
- Increased heat affecting all neighborhoods in general
- Difficulty navigating sidewalks in stroller due to damage/missing connections, which reduces the ability to travel within neighborhoods without vehicles
- Lack of public restrooms increases impact of climate hazards
- Child car facilities are at a higher risk to high heat/smokey conditions

What is Resilient?

Question 2: what areas and resources are resilient to climate hazards?

Identifying current places and things that are resilient to climate hazards or that generally support the climate resiliency of neighborhoods helps find potential actions to continue throughout Spokane's neighborhoods. This exercise helped highlight that a significant "resource" within our City is our residents.

- *Existing Tree Canopy*
 - Where it exists, the tree canopy increases shade and reduces the use of A/C during hotter months
 - Manito Boulevard tree coverage "makes the neighborhood"
 - Many parks have good tree coverage, providing shade
- *Revitalized Landscaping*
 - Overgrown shrubbery/unmanaged landscaping is being removed and open space is being refreshed (particularly within westside of the Comstock neighborhood)
 - With demographic changes, young families are often redoing landscaping/replacing trees that were taken down during development
 - Trees that fell down in Comstock Park during windstorms are being replanted
- *Community Connections*
 - Community connections support vulnerable groups during hazards
 - Concentration of social services at/around Northeast Community Center

- Strong community connections/relationships with neighbors - “neighbors supporting neighbors”
- Sharing of resources between neighbors
- Trust between neighbors creating a cohesive community
- Some areas have good utility infrastructure (power/data/wastewater), though there is need to expand
- Existing water features in parks and free pool access provide respite during heat events
- District 1 is considered to have built-in resiliency due to its past and existing socioeconomic status - there has already being a need to prepare for hazards or difficult times

Identified Opportunitites

In addition to answers to the above questions, the Workshops brought attention to potential policies or community actions that can support climate resiliency within Spokane.

- *Education*
 - Provide increased education on programs in place such as Spokanescape
 - Ensure educational opportunities are accessible and avoid barriers to participation
 - Increase knowledge of incentives or other financial assistance to make resiliency improvements (e.g. native and drought tolerant landscaping or home improvements)
- *Expand Tree Canopy*
 - Planting trees along railroad tracks can mitigate noise and pollution impacts while increasing tree canopies away from structures
 - Make it easier to have trees with maintenance support, increased education, etc.
 - Understand the causes behind fear or dislike of trees to support greater tree canopy acceptance
 - Monitor street trees to ensure proper maintenance and ensure longevity
- *Improve Landscaping Requirements*
 - Mitigate increased intensity of housing by replacing trees and requiring additional sideyard landscaping (though concerns were raised on impact of increased tree replacement requirements on development viability)

- Ensure standards allow space on properties for trees to grow in new development
- Include tree requirements within native and drought tolerant landscaping standards and programs
- Improve tree and landscaping guidelines to ensure species and planting requirements can manage current/changing weather and soil conditions
- *Resiliency Centers*
 - Ensure schools and libraries have high efficiency filtration to increase smoke preparedness
 - Increase the number of areas with air filtration, cooling, and heating to increase accessibility and ensure such centers are spread throughout the neighborhoods
- *Housing Equity*
 - Support increased housing and housing affordability with a big picture of how housing growth can meet both climate and housing goals
 - Maintain and rehabilitate housing to avoid displacement
- Improve walkability through traffic calming and crosswalks, supporting students walking to school and others navigating the city without personal vehicles
- Ensure access for emergency services with increased street parking that may result from parking policy changes
- Modify standards and requirements to make sure they are not one-size-fits-all, but rather meet the needs of unique neighborhoods
- Observe community behavior to capture real life actions and behavior, in addition to seeking community feedback
- Understand the impact of insurance costs with regard to potential resiliency measures (e.g. more trees near structures)

Next Steps

The Neighborhood Council Climate Workshops were an early start of community engagement that will continue throughout 2025 and 2026. The City of Spokane is continuing to work through understanding Spokane’s unique climate impacts and hazards, gathering data, and conducting analysis on our climate risks and community vulnerabilities. Additional community engagement opportunities – including a survey and community workshop – will help further inform this work. The



public is encouraged to stay engaged and keep an eye out for future opportunities to have their voice heard.

- **Stay Informed:** Follow the City of Spokane on social media and [sign up for email updates](#) to stay up-to-date on the latest developments in our climate planning efforts. You can also find more information on the project webpage at my.spokanecity.org/climateplanning.
- **Attend Events:** Look out for upcoming community workshops and events to chat, share information, and have your thoughts on climate planning heard.
- **Share Your Voice:** Your input is crucial in shaping our city's response to growing climate hazards. Join us for community workshops, town hall meetings, and online surveys to share your ideas, concerns, and priorities. You can also directly email the Climate Planning project team at climateplanning@spokanecity.org.



The WA Department of Commerce climate planning grant is supported with funding from Washington's Climate Commitment Act. The CCA supports Washington's climate action efforts by putting cap-and-invest dollars to work reducing climate pollution, creating jobs, and improving public health. [Information about the CCA is available on their website.](#)