



May 21, 2025

Olympia City Council
601 4th Avenue East
Olympia, WA 98507

Subject: Olympia Youth Council Feedback on Climate Element – Comprehensive Plan Update

Dear Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem and Councilmembers:

On behalf of the Olympia Youth Council, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to participate in the review and discussion of the Climate Element as part of the Olympia 2045 Comprehensive Plan update. We appreciate your commitment to engaging youth voices and incorporating our feedback into policies that shape Olympia's future.

We were pleased to see the thoughtful consideration given to the priorities and concerns we raised during our April 16, 2025, review of the Public Comment Draft. Below, we would like to reflect on key areas where our feedback was addressed and express our appreciation:

Accountability for Institutions and Industry

We emphasized the importance of holding institutions, businesses, and industry to higher standards in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and solid waste. We recognize the regulatory limitations at the local level and appreciate the City's alignment with the State's Climate Commitment Act, as well as your efforts to promote a circular economy through waste reduction and material reuse policies.

Promoting a Values-Driven Green Economy

Thank you for expanding the definition of "green jobs" and recognizing the need for broader workforce development that reflects youth values and supports climate action. We are encouraged by the City's continued collaboration with schools and look forward to future programming that prepares young people for meaningful careers in sustainability.

Community Belonging and Connection to Nature

We were glad to see that our emphasis on community identity and environmental stewardship is reflected in the Climate Element. Highlighting events like the Procession of the Species and strengthening partnerships with Parks and Recreation speaks directly to our vision for a connected, resilient Olympia.

Addressing Hopelessness and Ensuring Affordability

We appreciate your attention to our concerns around climate anxiety and the barriers many face in participating in climate solutions. The inclusion of environmental justice policies and incentives for affordability shows a strong commitment to equity and encourages further transparency in processes. We are especially encouraged by the inclusion of strategies that directly engage youth in outreach and policy development.

Support for EVs and Sustainable Transportation

The Youth Council supports the continued efforts to promote electric vehicle adoption and reduce vehicle miles traveled. We appreciate the City's collaboration with Intercity Transit and the addition of new strategies focused on increasing ridership through targeted outreach and marketing.

Retrofitting and Adaptive Reuse

We strongly support efforts to retrofit existing buildings for energy efficiency and climate resilience. The inclusion of new housing policies that address retrofitting and energy affordability demonstrates your responsiveness to our recommendations and a proactive approach to climate adaptation.

As youth, we are grateful for the City's ongoing commitment to climate action that is proficient, equitable, and forward-looking. We are proud to be part of this process and hope our continued participation can help shape and hold Olympia accountable to creating a City where all generations thrive in the face of climate challenges.

Sincerely,

Nolan O'Connell, Chair
Olympia Youth Council

cc: Jay Burney, City Manager
Pamela Braff, Climate Program Director
Natalie Weiss, Climate Resilience Coordinator