

## Natalie Weiss

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**From:** Olympia2045  
**Sent:** Monday, August 4, 2025 1:57 PM  
**Cc:** Pamela Braff; Natalie Weiss  
**Subject:** FW: Public comment for Public Hearing: Climate Action & Resilience Update

Good afternoon, Planning Commissioners –  
Please see the additional comments below related to the Climate Chapter. Thank you.

Kind regards,  
Casey Schaufler (he/him)  
Associate Planner  
City of Olympia | Community Planning & Economic Development  
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**Please note all correspondence is subject to public disclosure.**

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**From:** [casey.aker@proton.me](mailto:casey.aker@proton.me) <[casey.aker@proton.me](mailto:casey.aker@proton.me)>  
**Sent:** Saturday, July 26, 2025 8:53 AM  
**To:** Olympia2045 <[Olympia2045@ci.olympia.wa.us](mailto:Olympia2045@ci.olympia.wa.us)>  
**Subject:** Public comment for Public Hearing: Climate Action & Resilience Update

You don't often get email from [casey.aker@proton.me](mailto:casey.aker@proton.me). [Learn why this is important](#)

Honorable Mayor and Council members:

Thank you for your tireless work on Olympia's Climate Element. To ensure our city not only meets its climate goals but becomes a true national model of urban resilience and environmental justice, I urge you to adopt the following enforceable, equity-driven measures:

### 1. Elevate Tree Equity & Canopy Goals

- Map existing canopy coverage and set higher targets (e.g. 50% citywide by 2035) in neighborhoods that need shade most.
- Create a Tree Equity Fund: financed by a small surcharge on new construction, to plant and care for trees in underserved areas.

### 2. Protect Mature Trees as Critical Infrastructure

- Require a pre-construction arborist report for any project proposing tree removal.
- Institute developer performance bonds that can be forfeited if preserved trees die within five years, ensuring long-term care rather than one-time planting.

### 3. Embrace Species Diversity for Resilience

- Mandate a mix of native species: no single tree species to exceed 20% of plantings, to guard against pests, disease, and drought.
- Adopt Washington Native Plant Society recommendations for climate-adapted trees.

#### 4. Strengthen Riparian Buffers & Natural Floodways

- Require 100-foot vegetated setbacks around all streams, wetlands, and floodplains to act as living flood attenuation zones.
- Incentivize developers to protect or donate buffer land in exchange for modest density bonuses.

#### 5. Lock in Long-Term Stewardship

- Demand a 10-year maintenance plan and annual reporting for all new green infrastructure (bioswales, rain gardens, green roofs).
- Record maintenance easements holding developers, and all future owners, jointly liable for upkeep.

#### 6. Anchor Tribal Knowledge & Co-Management

- Formalize partnership with the Squaxin Island Tribe to integrate Traditional Ecological Knowledge in urban forest and shoreline projects.
- Require Tribal consultation on all publicly funded green-infrastructure designs to honor treaty rights and cultural practice.

#### 7. Embed Community Stewardship and Education

- Fund a Neighborhood Climate Stewards micro-grant program, enabling residents to co-design pocket parks, rain gardens, and pollinator strips.
- Host annual “Canopy Walks” and tree-planting festivals to build local ownership.

#### 8. Tie Parking to Greening

- Require any new private lot over 10 stalls to convert 15% of its footprint into bioretention planters with shade trees.
- Offer parking reductions (one stall per 500 sq ft of green roof or public-access green space) to reward developers who integrate nature.

#### 9. Mandate Urban Heat Island Monitoring

- Commission biennial thermal maps of our neighborhoods and publish results in the City’s climate progress report.
- Use data to target tree plantings and cooling grants where they deliver the highest public health benefits.

#### 10. Strengthen Enforcement & Transparency

- Require quarterly online reporting of citywide canopy cover, park-acreage expansions, and green-infrastructure installations.
- Create escalating fines and project-holdbacks for developments that violate green requirements or remove trees illegally.

Implementing these bold, specific actions will transform our Climate Element from aspirational to actionable by protecting lives, improving air quality, reducing flood risk, and ensuring every Olympian, present and future, benefits equitably from our city’s natural heritage.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Respectfully,

Casey Akerhielm

Olympia Resident & Climate Advocate



## Pamela Braff

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**From:** Olympia2045  
**Sent:** Monday, August 4, 2025 2:08 PM  
**To:** Gordon Wheat; Olympia2045  
**Cc:** Pamela Braff; Casey Schaufler  
**Subject:** RE: Public Health perspective on the Resilience sub-element

Thank you for submitting comments on the Climate Action & Resilience Chapter. Your comments will be shared with the Planning Commission.

Joyce

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**From:** Gordon Wheat <gwheat12@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, August 4, 2025 11:20 AM  
**To:** Olympia2045 <Olympia2045@ci.olympia.wa.us>  
**Subject:** Public Health perspective on the Resilience sub-element

Dear Members of the Olympia Planning Commission, City Council Members and Climate Staff,

In the Engage Olympia 2045: Climate Action and Resilience, the staff reported that one commenter had recommended that Extreme Heat be given a higher priority, among all of the climate resilience challenges we face. This is not entirely accurate. Natalie Weiss, the Olympia resilience lead, asked me to convene the Olympia Physician for Social Responsibility Climate and Health Task Force in December, and the group of 9 public health-oriented local physicians gave her one clear message: the evidence clearly shows that we have one climate-related public health emergency that supersedes all others - extreme heat events. This is also the message from the American Public Health Association and other national public health organizations: "Extreme heat kills more people each year than all other extreme weather events combined and disproportionately affects vulnerable communities. Fortunately, many, if not most, heat-related illnesses and deaths are preventable." We saw this risk just recently, when thousands were reported to have died in some of the major cities in the June 2025 heat event in Europe.

Unfortunately, this risk assessment is doubly true here in the Puget Sound, where we are projected to have among the greatest increases in frequency and severity of extreme heat events in the US. Additionally, we are among the most vulnerable to mass casualty events from heat domes because we are a northern city that is generally a heat refuge, meaning our population and our infrastructure are not prepared to handle such events. That our residents in the Northwest do not understand the danger of heat when it does occur as evidenced by the fact that 98% of the 619 coroner confirmed immediate heat stroke victims in the greater Vancouver BC area, during the 6/21 heat dome, died in their own homes, and 28% of these victims did not even call 911 for help before they died. The need for people to know how to protect themselves is evident from the fact that 83% of the victims who did call 911 were not able to be resuscitated by paramedics, largely because of the delay in emergency response. ("Extreme Heat and Human Mortality," 2022) Crisis management of emergency care is in no one's interest.

This June 2021 Extreme Heat Event, which led to thousands of deaths in the Pacific Northwest, will be seen as mild compared to the heat events we are likely to experience shortly. We are still experiencing an exponential increase in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (IPCC, n.d.), we have not experienced the full effect of GHG emissions already released (NOAA, n.d.), and we are experiencing more extreme heat events than predicted

from climate models for global warming (NASA, n.d.). The northern hemisphere jet stream is weakening significantly, increasing our likelihood for heat domes.

“Cooling Thurston” is using grant funding to demonstrate the most important preventive measures envisioned by the Thurston County Extreme Heat Emergency Response and Illness Prevention Plan. The preventive measures that can reduce heat-related illness and mortality are fairly simple and low-cost, so these measures should be the centerpiece of city, county, and state climate resilience plans. One of the main interventions is simply education of vulnerable populations regarding the danger of heat, how to stay safe, and when to call 911. The other most important measure is ensuring that all the most vulnerable community members have access to refuge cooling to survive heat events. This needs to mostly be in people’s own homes, as evidence shows that housed people do not go to cooling shelters, nor could we provide adequate shelter for this large population if they did. Portable heat pumps are dropping in price dramatically. They can effectively cool at least one large room to shelter in place during an extreme heat event. Olympia should seek funding to provide this low-cost solution to our most vulnerable residents. The city of Portland has committed to providing 25,000 portable heat pumps to its vulnerable renters. This is climate justice, good public health policy, and protection for our EMS and hospital resources for the benefit of the entire community. Communities seeking this funding will increase the likelihood that the state legislature will help.

Lumping all of our climate vulnerabilities together as equivalent risks is not consistent with the evidence. Identifying heat events as our greatest risk and committing to pursue the programmatic policies that can save many lives and reduce the often irreversible illness caused by heat events is good public health policy, and should be clearly reflected in Olympia’s Climate Action and Resilience Element.

I am sorry that I am not able to attend the August 4th meeting. I would like to get back with you after the planning meeting with the director of CPED, the director of the Health Department, the county managers and the chair of the county commissioners, to see how Olympia, my home city, can join with the county to plan for a programmatic response to our greatest climate public health challenge.

Gordon Wheat MD

For the Thurston Climate Action Team, Climate and Health Team, and Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility Climate Task Force Extreme Heat Working Group (and our Olympia physician sub-group).

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hAaywtYFNhLo13RplqcRQJ2xmB\\_NRQaXRTsX9kQOCIE/edit?tab=t.0](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hAaywtYFNhLo13RplqcRQJ2xmB_NRQaXRTsX9kQOCIE/edit?tab=t.0)

## Pamela Braff

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**From:** Tom Crawford <tom@thurstonclimateaction.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, August 4, 2025 2:58 PM  
**To:** Pamela Braff  
**Subject:** Fwd: Written comments for tonight's public hearing  
**Attachments:** T Crawford Comments on City of Olympia Comp Plan Climate Element 08-04-25.docx

Woops! Forgot to attach the document. Here it is.

Tom

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Tom Crawford <[tom@thurstonclimateaction.org](mailto:tom@thurstonclimateaction.org)>  
**Date:** Mon, Aug 4, 2025 at 2:54 PM  
**Subject:** Written comments for tonight's public hearing  
**To:** Pamela Braff <[pbraff@ci.olympia.wa.us](mailto:pbraff@ci.olympia.wa.us)>

Hi, Pamela,

Here are some written comments for tonight's public hearing with the Planning Commission for the city's Comprehensive Plan Climate Element. I plan to be there to summarize them verbally.

I would prefer to do that in person, and I notice that when I registered I received a Zoom link. Would you suggest using the Zoom link rather than in person, or will it be ok for me to show up in person?

Thanks!

Tom

Tom Crawford, Board Vice President  
Thurston Climate Action Team  
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*We need to remember our own heroic nature, our capacity for courage, compassion, and action, to remember those who came before us who took action against the odds and sometimes won.... Often, they changed what is possible, in part by refusing to accept what were supposed to be the limits.*

-Rebecca Solnit

## Comments on City of Olympia's Comprehensive Plan Update, Climate Element

By Tom Crawford, Vice President, Thurston Climate Action Team

August 4, 2025

First, I want to thank city staff and the Planning Commission for the excellent work you've done completing the Climate Element for this year's update to the City's Comprehensive Plan. Thank you also for reviewing my previous suggestions and incorporating several of them. This document provides an ambitious but necessary set of goals and policies for achieving net zero emissions community wide by 2040.

Next, I want to offer a few suggestions for further improving this document.

1. In the section titled, "Reducing GHG Emissions," (pp. 3-4), there is no mention of the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan (TCMP) effort. This might be a useful addition to that section, to provide additional context for the Climate Element, especially since many of the policies in that element are drawn from the TCMP.
2. I previously recommended adding a goal to more fully engage and educate the public on climate change and needed actions. Staff response to this recommendation is as follows: "It is outside the City's scope to provide broad public education about the causes and impacts of climate change." I'm sure the City recognizes that public engagement and education is essential to building broad community commitment needed to achieve the goals stated in the City's proposed climate element. The question here may be "Within the scope of which existing public body does this important work fall?" Since it is a public health concern, it might be assigned to the County Board of Health. Whatever agency takes the lead on this in our region, I'm sure the City of Olympia will want to be involved and coordinating with this work. Here's some possible language:
  - a. GCx. Work with regional agencies (for example, the Thurston Board of Health, non-profits, schools and other cities) to ensure Olympia residents understand the causes, risks and harms associated with human-caused climate change (including the community and personal actions necessary to address this existential threat), and are willing to commit the required time and resources (including financial resources) to address this challenge.
    - i. Coordinate with and support regional agencies (for example, the Board of Health, schools, non profits and other jurisdictions) in creating and delivering educational and community engagement curricula and materials that reach all population groups within Olympia using in person and virtual events.
    - ii. Support and coordinate with regional agencies (for example, the Thurston Board of Health, schools and other cities) to develop and implement a media campaign (including social media) to educate Olympia residents about climate change and the city's efforts to address it.

3. Natural Environment, policy 6.2, reads: "POLICY: Preserve land and acquire new parcels when there are opportunities to reduce expand and connect habitat and protect the most environmentally sensitive or socially important landscapes." Delete the word "reduce".
4. Within the Land Use and Urban Design chapter, policy 18.8 reads: "POLICY: Provide technical guidance and other incentives to encourage electrification and energy efficiency retrofits in existing buildings. Prioritize retrofits in overburdened communities and include protections to avoid displacement and financial burden on renters and small businesses." After the word "Provide" add "standards, ". Standards are necessary in order to achieve the goals of the TCMP and the electrification goal for this section (goal 18a). I understand there has been some legal controversy around this. With courts invalidating I-2066, standards for phasing out fossil gas are still legal. The Comprehensive Plan should allow for this kind of standard. The exact mechanism can be determined based on what will be most effective.
5. Thank you for including, in the Land Use and Urban Design chapter, a recognition of the importance of protecting people from extreme weather, in Policy 18.4: " POLICY: Incentivize and support weatherization upgrades, passive survivability, cooling and air filtration systems, and energy redundancy for homes and facilities serving vulnerable populations." We also believe public education on how to protect from extreme heat is very important to protect public safety, especially among our vulnerable populations. You might add language on public education to this policy, such as, "Provide public education to vulnerable populations on protecting from extreme heat."
6. Within the Transportation Chapter, policy 37.2, after the word "by" add "providing city incentives and". We should not depend solely on external resources to help residents transition to zero emission forms of transportation by 2040.

Finally, as a TCAT board member, I relay our organization's commitment to support the achievement of the city's climate goals. We recognize this will require a great deal of work in multiple sectors of the community. We are convinced that it will result in a better economy, better jobs, a more vibrant culture, and better health for everyone.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important work, and your dedication to the Olympia community through your public service.



## Natalie Weiss

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**From:** Gordon Wheat <gwheat12@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 6, 2025 3:30 PM  
**To:** Pamela Braff  
**Cc:** Paris McClusky; Natalie Weiss  
**Subject:** Re: Meeting Options

Pamela and Natalie,

Thank you for the meeting on August 13th. The changes I am seeking, as a representative of the public health community, are fairly simple, and the policy asks are low-hanging fruit, costing little compared to the lives that could be saved.

I know you don't view the city as a primary provider of education and outreach regarding climate hazards, but the city actually conducts numerous outreach and education initiatives, which could have an impact in conjunction with the efforts of the health department and the county. There is outreach through the utility bills "5 things". The city could host educational events for city residents or those in particularly vulnerable Olympia communities regarding heat events.

Why not add to section 2.5: Policy: "Coordinate with the county and the health department outreach and education programs regarding the greatest climate public health risks for Olympia residents. This outreach should prioritize episodic extreme heat events and, secondarily, wildfire smoke events, as our greatest public health hazards." These are the priorities identified by the Emergency Management Council and the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

In section 2.3, acknowledge that climate resilience is first and foremost the public health of our residents. Add: "Monitor climate public health science and recommendations to assess how climate change is affecting the public health of our community."

In section 2.4 again, resilience is public health, not just infrastructure: POLICY: Update Olympia's Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment alongside 10-year Comprehensive Plan updates to reflect the latest understanding of climate trends and their impact on community assets. (add: "and public health").

Acknowledge the public health consensus. It is well expressed by the American Public Health Association: "Extreme heat kills more people each year than all other extreme weather events combined and disproportionately affects vulnerable communities. Fortunately, many, if not most, heat-related illnesses and deaths are preventable." This is particularly true here in the South Puget Sound region, and therefore, extreme heat events should be recognized as a climate public health priority in the Resilience Element.

In Section 18.4: POLICY: Incentivize and support weatherization upgrades, passive survivability, cooling and air filtration systems, and energy redundancy for homes and facilities serving vulnerable populations. This is a fine general statement, but does not recognize the public health priority of actually protecting our vulnerable residents from the one climate hazard that is highly likely to kill and injure scores, if not hundreds of our residents just in Olympia, and before very long: heat events.

We are working the state level to get funding for cooling vulnerable residents, but the legislature needs to see that there is demand from the cities and counties to be seeking such funding to save lives in their communities and to prevent crisis management of care for their EMS and hospitals.

How about adding to 18.4: "Olympia will also seek funding for refuge cooling of our vulnerable residents to be able to survive severe extreme heat events."

Thanks,  
Gordon