

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Update on
Climate Action
Plan Progress
November 2021

PHASE III: CLIMATE ACTION PLANNING

City of Tacoma, Office of Environmental
Policy and Sustainability
&
Citizens for a Healthy Bay



Phase III Community Engagement Report

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Purpose and Overview

This public comment period provided opportunities for community members to review, suggest edits to, and more generally comment on the draft of the Climate Action Plan before it is developed into a final draft and delivered to Tacoma City Council. City Council may then suggest further potential edits before considering the Plan for adoption. The October 1 – October 20 public comment period followed two phases of engagement that served to (1) develop a sense of community needs and priorities and (2) establish a list of effective, equitable, and community-informed climate actions and investments. The Phase 3 input process involved virtual public meetings, online surveying, stakeholder engagement, and other methods. The input period drew comments from more than 112 community members, including letters of support or recommendation letters from 8 groups or organizations. This process builds on input from 889 of community members during Phase I and Phase II, spanning September 2020 – June 2021. Altogether, climate action planning has engaged 1,001 community members and counting!

Engagement Methods

The Phase III public input period depended on a mix of engagement methods, including virtual public meetings, social media promotions, online surveying, stakeholder engagement, emailing, and other communications. Social media promotion and emailing supported virtual stakeholder meetings, virtual public meetings, and online surveying. Stakeholders engaged during the public input period include Climate Ambassadors; the Environmental Justice Leaders Workgroup (EJLW); Frontline “Host” Organizations; City committees, boards, and commissions; local neighborhood councils, local environmental, housing, transportation, governmental, or industrial organizations; technical teams of staff and external service providers and academic experts; and the general public. Staff support focused on frontline community members, the EJ Leaders Workgroup, and Frontline “Host” Organizations to increase representation in the input process as well as deepen input heard from these stakeholders.

Community Engagement Activities & Participation Results

More than 112 community members participated in the Phase III public input process, whether through the online public input form (which served as a survey), virtual stakeholder meetings, virtual public meetings, letter writing, or other comment communications. Results are reflected in the table below. Most participants gave comment through the online public input form. Several organizations or groups provided comment in written letters, including Citizens Climate Lobby, Citizens for a Healthy Bay, Downtown on the Go, Landmarks Preservation Commission, Manufacturing Industrial Council for the South Sound, Pierce Transit, Planning Commission, Port of Tacoma, Puget Sound Energy, Sustainable Tacoma Commission, U.S. Oil and Refining Company, and WestRock Company. [Commissions](#) are City-appointed community advisory bodies.

	Attendance	Respondents
Online Public Input Form	-	60
Organization Meetings (4)	16	-
Virtual Public Meetings (2)	22	-
Email Comments	-	1
Letters	-	12
Social Media Comments	-	2
TOTAL	38	75

Table 1: Participation in the Phase III Public Input Process

Who We Heard From

Of 60 total online public input form respondents, 29 self-identified as frontline community members – approximately 48% of input form respondents. Three Frontline “Host” Organizations participated in virtual meetings, including 14 frontline community members. The 10-member EJLW submitted a collection of comments as individual Workgroup members. Other Phase III engagement activities did not track frontline participation.

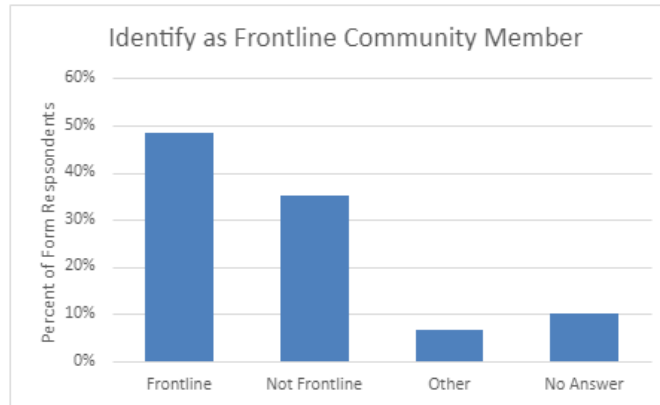


Figure 1: Percentage of Online Public Input Form Respondents that Identify as a Frontline Community Member

Forty-two percent of online public input form respondents self-identified as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC). The largest BIPOC groups included “two or more races or ethnicities” at 18% and “Latinx, Latine, Latino, or Latina” at 12%. According to [U.S. Census Bureau data](#), Tacoma’s BIPOC population makes up 35% of our community. Notably, 17% of respondents chose not to answer this question. Percentages are only based on those who did answer. Other Phase III engagement activities did not track race or ethnicity demographics.

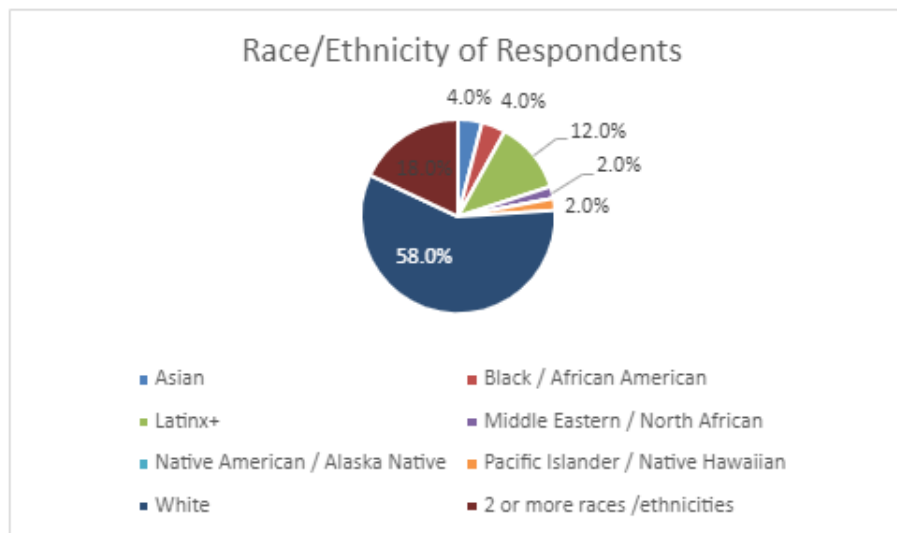


Figure 2: Race/Ethnicity of Online Public Input Form Respondents as Percentages*
*17% of respondents chose not to answer this question. Percentages are based on those who did answer.

Twenty-eight percent of online public input form respondents self-identified as having a household income of less than \$50,000 annually. An additional 33% has a household income \$50,000 to \$100,000 annually. According to [U.S. Census Bureau data](#), Tacoma’s household median income is approximately \$62,400 for an average household size of 2.5. [Approximately 35%](#) of Tacoma households have an

income below \$50,000 annually, and an additional 33% of households have an income between \$50,000 to \$100,000 annually. Household size was not tracked. Notably, 28% of respondents chose not to answer this question. Percentages are only based on those who did answer. Other Phase III engagement activities did not track household income demographics.

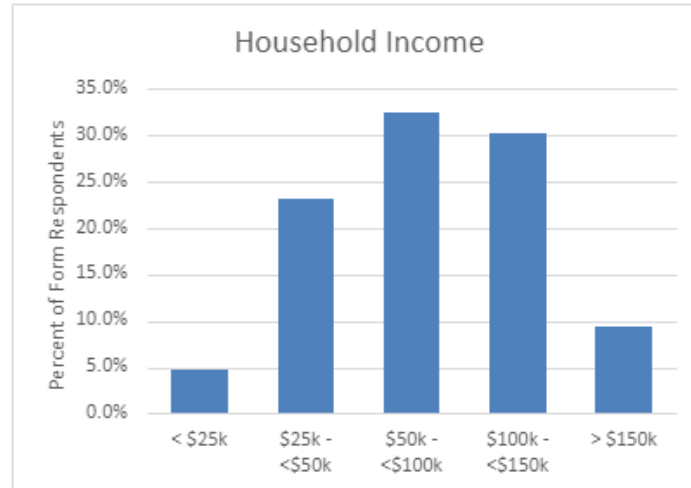


Figure 3: Household Income of Online Public Input Form Respondents as Percentages
 *28% of respondents chose not to answer this question. Percentages are based on those who did answer.

Thirty percent of online public input form respondents self-identified as younger than 25 years old and an additional 6% identified as 65 years of age or older. According to [U.S. Census Bureau data](#), 16% of Tacoma community members are [younger than 25 years old](#) and an additional 13% are 65 years of age or older. Household size was not tracked. Notably, 12% of respondents chose not to answer this question. Percentages are only based on those who did answer. One youth-based Frontline “Host” Organization, the Mayor’s Youth Commission, participated in virtual meetings, including 12 youth community members. Other Phase III engagement activities did not track age demographics.

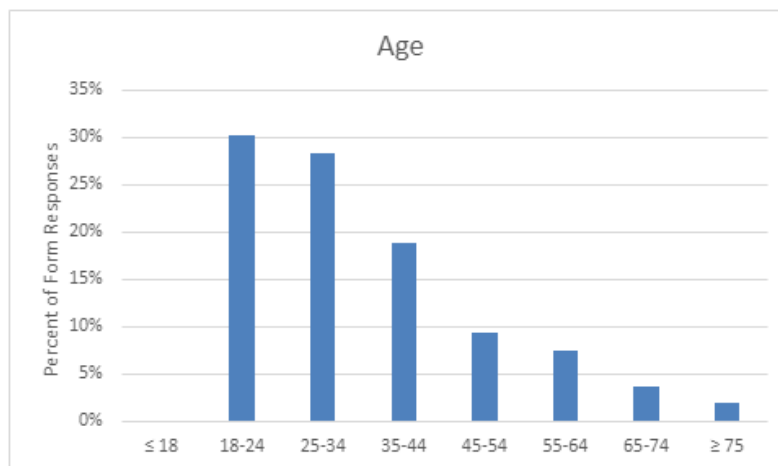


Figure 4: Age of Online Public Input Form Respondents as Percentages*
 *12% of respondents chose not to answer this question. Percentages are based on those who did answer.

What We Heard

Across input activities, staff heard the following input themes:

- That the Plan should be more detailed, measurable, and bold
- That the Plan should focus more on industry, whether to address emissions or provide additional engagement and support for businesses transitioning to a low carbon future
- That the Plan is important for leading our community in taking climate action
- That the Plan provides strong focus on social equity
- That the City, through the Plan and other work, should do more pollution prevention, protect natural systems, and develop green infrastructure solutions
- That many low carbon technologies exist and should be rapidly used now, while others need more development as we approach 2050
- That community members are interested in and concerned about funding, staffing, and follow through on implementation of the Plan
- That community members expect better transit and active transportation options from the City and other public agencies tasked with these services
- That the Plan is related to, should build on, and go beyond other City and public plans and activities

The following paragraphs examine feedback heard through different engagement methods.

Virtual Public Meetings

Two **virtual public meetings** were held on October 9th and October 12th to meet with stakeholders to discuss their comments regarding our draft Climate Action Plan in a live session. Both meetings were held outside regular working hours to accommodate for many working schedules and maximize attendance.

There was a total of 21 attendees for our virtual public meetings, and 11 people filled out our virtual poll to indicate whether there was a change in knowledge about the Climate Action Plan as a result of the meeting. Community members who came with limited knowledge about the Plan consistently indicated they learned from the meeting, as depicted in Figure 5 below.

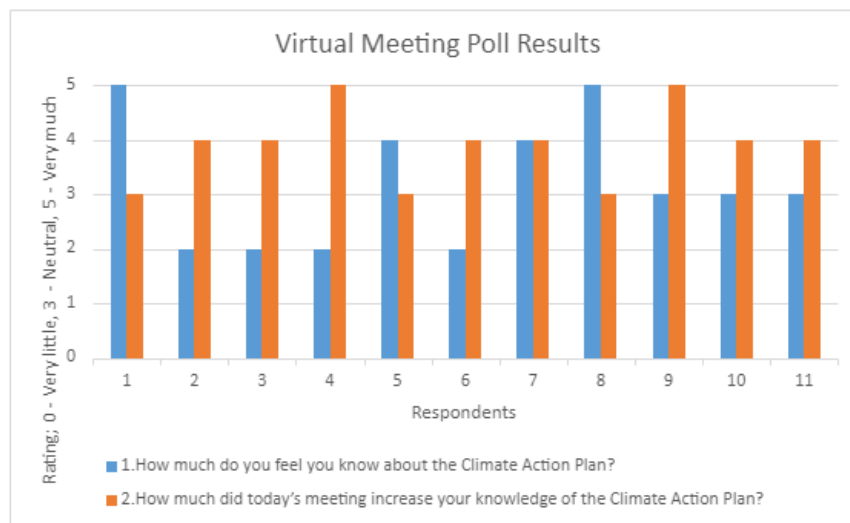


Figure 5: Change in knowledge of the Climate Action Plan in Virtual Public Meeting Attendees

More than 60% of our attendees noted an increase in their knowledge of the Climate Action Plan after the meeting. Attendees also pledged to continue to engage civically, whether by reviewing the Climate Action Plan, submitting the public comment form, contacting Tacoma City Council, or contacting their state or national representatives.

October 9 <i>Attendees: 9; Zoom poll responses:5</i>	October 12 <i>Attendees: 13; Zoom poll responses:6</i>
<i>Portions of the Plan Community Members Were Excited About</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tacoma Equity Index map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership with the Puyallup Tribe • Focus on equity
<i>Community Interests & Concerns</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tidelands Non-interim Regulations • Affordable housing • Transit access & CAP connection to Pierce Transit services • Partnership with local organizations and offices such as the South Tacoma Neighborhood Council and Office of Arts & Cultural Vitality • Green jobs • Funding to protect groundwater aquifer • Infrastructure maintenance, preservation, and retrofits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational engagement opportunities for students • Green jobs and equitable hiring practices • Collaborate with local public organizations to leverage shared funds and resources • Aligning funding with climate goals • Sustainable infrastructure and preserving infrastructure • Shift focus from high-level planning to specific actionable items and implementation details

Table 2: Public Comments in the Virtual Public Meetings

Based on their questions and input, it was clear that most of the attendees were concerned with the implementation stage of the Climate Action Plan, shifting the focus from high-level planning to outlining specific actionable items. The topics of concern included affordable housing, accessible transit, infrastructure conservation, professional and educational development opportunities, and funding for the Plan.

Online Public Input Form

During the public input period, community members provided 60 **public input form responses**. The public comment forms also reflected similar concerns regarding the implementation of the Climate Action Plan that were shared during the virtual meetings. One-third of the comments shared discussed CAP implementation and accountability of actions and strategies. General CAP responses noted the importance of specific actions outlined in the plan, including mitigating climate impacts and decreasing emissions. 17% of respondents acknowledged the importance of forming partnerships with the local Puyallup Tribe and working with historically underrepresented frontline community members to prioritize climate action through a social equity lens. The fourth most common response by theme was regarding the preservation and expansion of existing infrastructure, such as buildings, and urban forests.

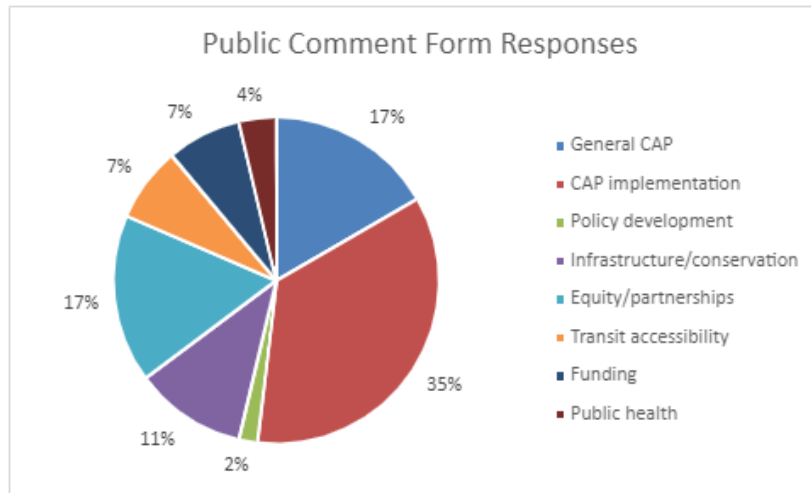


Figure 6: Public Comment Form Responses by Theme

Based on 60 online public input form responses, the draft Climate Action Plan received an average score of 5.4 in support of the Plan. Responses were based on a scale of one to seven, where one is “strongly against” the Plan and seven is “strongly in support of” the Plan. 58% of input form respondents expressed strong support for the Plan with a score of six or seven; 77% of respondents gave a score of five of greater in support of the Plan. Thirteen percent were against the Plan as drafted.

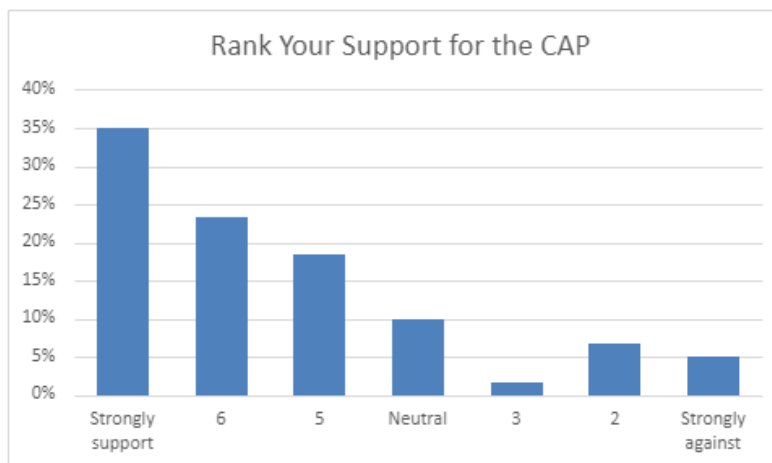


Figure 7: Percentage of CAP Approval from Online Public Input Form Respondents

Environmental Justice Leaders Workgroup

The Environmental Justice Leaders Workgroup (EJLW), composed of frontline Tacoma community members, informed climate action engagement and planning processes through regular virtual meetings and other interactions with staff from September 2020 – October 2021. In the third phase of climate action planning and engagement, the Workgroup met to develop Workgroup and individual member comments for the Plan – which can be viewed in Section 8.

Together, the Workgroup provided one shared comment related to the engagement and planning processes as well as the final draft of the Climate Action Plan:

“As it currently stands, the CAP does not adequately reflect EJLW’s direct input and stated priorities from the past year. We recognize and commend the City of Tacoma for taking a

risk and branching out to change their public engagement strategies from the past. We strongly encourage them to continue down this path with some necessary course corrections. We thank you for seeing this need to incorporate our voices and now we demand that you listen to us: structural, systemic and institutional change must happen now! And in order for communities' faith in municipal institutions to be restored and carried forward for the duration of this CAP, we must move toward a collaborative governance structure."

Comment Letters

Other stakeholder groups commenting on the Plan, whether through letters or in virtual meetings, generally communicated support for the Plan. Letters from some industrial businesses communicated concerns about regulations and technology development to support the transition away from fossil fuels through 2050.

Lessons from Phase III

Overall, staff have identified various strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement from the third phase of climate action planning and engagement.

Strengths

- Staff were able to re-engage some Frontline "Host" Organizations and groups who are typically underrepresented and underserved by these processes
- Various organizations and groups have already provided comment letters on the draft, and likely more comments will be delivered as Tacoma City Council reviews and considers adoption of the Plan
- Despite a shorter Phase III timeline with more limited staff resources, participation in the public input process approached a representative sample of Tacomans when measuring for participation by BIPOC community members, low or moderate income households, and youth
- Relationships with community members or partners helped bring participants into the process
- Community and staff are eager to see the City pivot from planning toward taking bold action and engaging community in the implementation process

Challenges and Areas for Improvement

- Engagement with and supporting policy- and investment-shaping input from frontline community members that are historically underrepresented and underserved and expected to experience the first and worst impacts of the climate emergency
- Engagement with and input from businesses was more limited than desired
- Despite the urgency of climate and social equity action, some community members and stakeholders feel processes should slow down or be more continuous to improve community knowledge about City plans, policies, processes, and work

Reflections on Phases I – III of Climate Action Planning and Engagement

Reflections on the Process and Work Ahead

- Closing this stage of climate action and climate action planning work is both exciting and leaves us with a feeling of non-closure. It was more than a year-long public engagement and planning process supported by an additional year of preparatory staff work. It occurred against a

backdrop of a global pandemic-recession, a social justice crisis, turmoil in America's experiment in self-governance, and an urgent climate emergency.

- This process was informed through years of engagement, input, policy, and planning work. This looks like the relationships between community members, stakeholders, and staff or elected representatives. In addition, a collection of planning and engagement processes contributed to the discussions and thinking in this process; these processes include: the Tacoma Community Survey (2021), One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan (updated annually), Tideflats Public Engagement Plan (2021), Affordable Housing Action Strategy (2018), and the Transportation Master Plan (2015), among other processes.
- The climate emergency is here now. It impacts our communities today – and the impacts are uneven and inequitable.
- The problems and opportunities associated with climate change and climate action are in many cases very clear. This is a problem that has been well understood by the scientific community for decades, and the time to act is now. To protect a more equitable, livable future for our communities and coming generations – which cannot speak for themselves – we must act transformatively. Failure is not an option. We must try mightily.
- There is much more work to do building relationships, delivering on input and investments outlined in the plan, and finding the resources to deliver.
- The Plan's success relies on the input and accountability provided by community, the recommendations and work of staff, partnerships, and decisions by elected representatives. In many ways, the climate emergency must be solved with technical solutions and investments underwritten by local democratic decision-makers.

Strengths

- Emphasizing relationships and the quality of input through new engagement processes and participation roles, such as the Climate Ambassadors, EJ Leaders Workgroup, Frontline "Host" Organizations, and community partner Citizens for a Healthy Bay
- Developing new virtual civic engagement practices
- Piloting stipends for equitable community participation in planning processes
- Engaging a breadth of valued stakeholders, including frontline communities, staff, and external service providers across many departments and organizations

Challenges and Areas for Improvement

- Building our understanding of our history of social and environmental injustices
- Improving language access consistently, such as by translating documents or providing content on the City's webpage, which can be translated to 100+ languages
- Improving community representation in staffing
- Balancing engagement and planning processes that must accompany efforts and investments that deliver on input we heard and benefits outlined in Plan
- Maintaining relationships through staffing turnover and a rebalance of time focused on Plan implementation
- Improving educational materials for civic engagement processes, balancing completeness of information with practical brevity