

TACOMA CLIMATE ACTION PLAN



SECTION 8, ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE LEADERS WORKGROUP

ABOUT THE WORKGROUP

The Environmental Justice Leaders Workgroup (EJLW) informed climate action engagement and planning processes through regular virtual meetings and other interactions with staff from September 2020 – October 2021. The EJLW also indirectly contributed to the language of the Climate Action Plan through their comments. The Workgroup membership was limited to frontline community members and included:

Alexia Henderson	Dylan Tran
Monica Ghosh	Milly Vara
Ashley Mocorro-Powell	Aarin Wilde
Patricia Ortiz	Tera Williams
Danelle Reed	Michelle Woo

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE LEADERS WORKGROUP COMMENT

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.”

Environmental Justice Leaders Workgroup

INDIVIDUAL MEMBER COMMENTS

Some of the Workgroup’s members wished to contribute individual comments about the engagement and planning processes, the final draft of the Climate Action Plan, and the Plan’s implementation following adoption. These comments are attributed to individual Workgroup members below:

“165 years have passed since the Medicine Creek Treaty Council convened. 163 years have passed since the Medicine Creek Treaty was re-negotiated. Since the inception of the 1st Treaty Council the Medicine Creek Treaty Tribes honorably agreed to the terms while agreeing to co-habitat with their new neighbors, with the understanding that we as first peoples of these lands would continue to have access to our subsistence and ceremonial plants, fish, and animals. To this day the City of Tacoma continues to dishonor the Medicine Creek Treaty Tribes and Puyallup Tribes sovereignty every time it makes decisions that harms the social-ecological systems within the ceded areas of the Medicine Creek Treaty including but not limited to- Commencement Bay, Puyallup River, Tacoma Tidelands, and all lands and waters within the city’s jurisdiction. Furthermore, the City of Tacoma continuously fails to dishonor the sovereignty of the Puyallup Tribe every time the City of Tacoma makes decisions that impact the climate without collaborating, consulting, and without the consent of the Puyallup Tribe.”

Workgroup members Patricia Ortiz and Danelle Reed*

*Patricia and Danelle wish to note that they do not speak for nor represent the opinion of the governing body of the Puyallup Tribe

“The other [issue] is the contamination that the government doesn’t tell us about or put out information about. They don’t tell us anything, about the airplanes from the military or the commercial airplanes. All of those things are damaging [to] us. They create a lot of contamination. They don’t show it on the internet. Why? So we don’t say anything. So we don’t say anything, or know about it, and they will continue contaminating and we [will continue] getting sicker.

“My other [issue] is the deforestation of trees, that they come and they are taking those away from us. We are lacking that oxygen. People are cutting trees. It is something essential for human beings. If they need to cut those trees, then they should bring them back. Maybe not as big, but little by little [newly planted trees] will grow. They should not just cut and leave an empty space. There should be a balance. If I cut, then I will reforest again. And the other [issue] is the variation of certain trees. There is a balance. There shouldn’t only be pines or oaks, there are more trees. Not only outside or in the parks, there are more areas around the houses or apartments. They should have more trees. We need that shade in the summertime. It’s not the same as being inside your house in the air conditioning. Sitting outside looking at the kids running and [spending] time with family, it’s not the same to be under an umbrella than to be under a tree.”

Workgroup member Milly Vara

“Although the Environmental Justice Leaders Workshop group does not feel as though the Climate Action Plan reflects the group’s direct input, we agreed upon some fundamental needs for the people of Tacoma. I personally believe that environmental Justice for Tacoma means equitable access to the necessities of quality life. It is important to prioritize the historically underserved communities to promote equity. We must improve food security, housing security, improving environmental health, and regulation of commercial and industrial environmental impacts. And above all else we need to recognize the sovereignty of the Puyallup Tribe. As the original stewards of this land, they should be consulted for environmental solutions and climate planning on tribal lands.

“This EJLW group was only commissioned for a one-year period and despite the many fundamental impediments to the progress of this group, time was the most limiting factor. Despite its’ limitations, EJLW was a good idea to improve community involvement and increase community trust in municipal entities. Though one year was not a sufficient amount of time for the EJLW to contribute to the Tacoma Climate Action plan in a meaningful way. To ensure equitable change this work must be continued by providing a forum to community members who have been historically underserved to discuss environmental justice and other related issues with the City. This forum should be a permanent fixture in climate planning of Tacoma and would act as watchdog, advisor and contributor, separate from Tacoma Sustainability Commission in that it would be comprised of frontline community members. By supporting the development of community led organizations, the City would create a pipeline of community leaders, spaces for conversation and resource sharing, and easier access to community involvement all of which would achieve the equitable improvements that the Climate Action Plan seeks to provide.”

- Workgroup member Alexia Henderson