



# PROPOSED CLIMATE ACTION FUND

Public Engagement Summary

March 2022



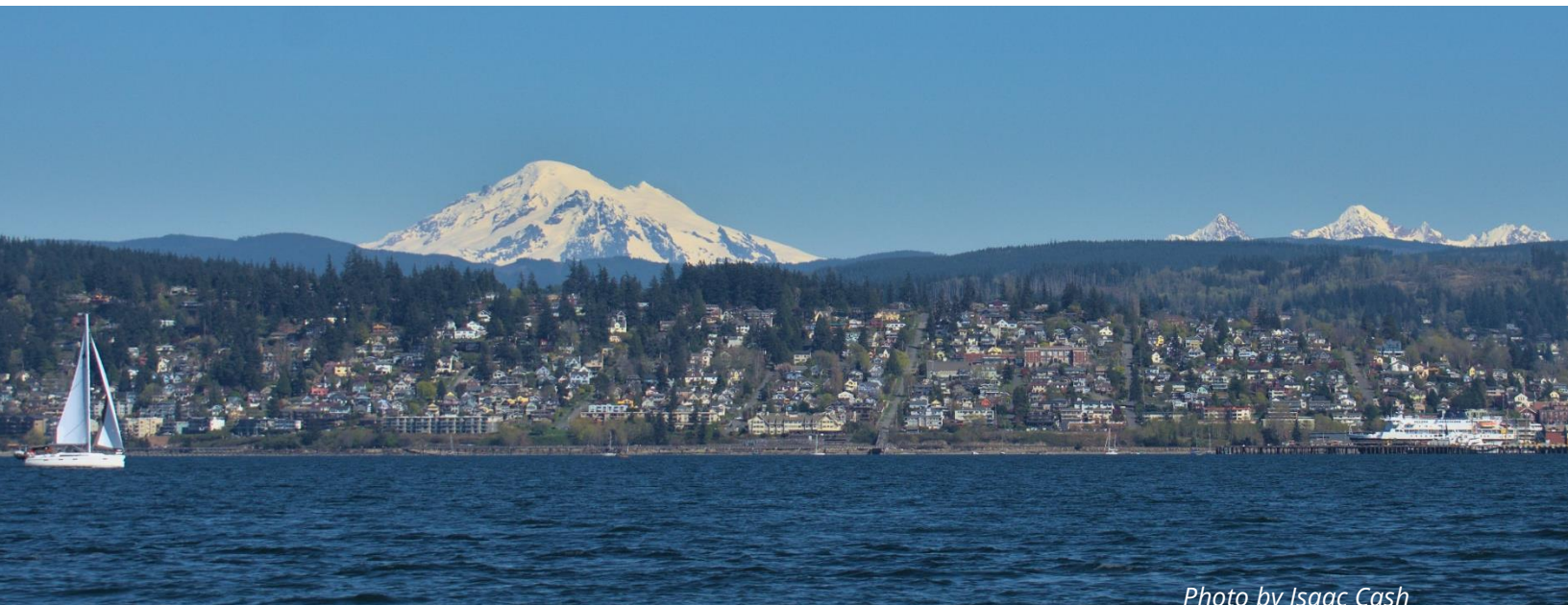
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# OVERVIEW

In February 2022, City staff completed a series of focus groups and public forums and collected online feedback about Mayor Seth Fleetwood’s proposal to add a Climate Action Fund to the November 2022 ballot. The proposed Fund would provide revenue to increase programs and other efforts to expedite the Bellingham’s climate action goals. The community provided over 350 comments and questions through the public engagement opportunities.

The City will use the gathered feedback to inform the process of creating a ballot measure proposal for City Council to consider in May 2022. Specifically, staff were interested in understanding which issues are most important to the community and how to best utilize funding to maximize community benefits within the context of the proposed Climate Action Fund.

This public feedback process is just part of continued opportunities for the public and various interest groups to engage in the City’s climate action program. As more programs are developed there will be further public engagement to gather feedback, including additional efforts to ensure that vulnerable communities are included in this engagement process.



*Photo by Isaac Cash*

## Focus Groups

The City invited individuals from varying organizations, businesses and community groups to participate in online focus groups, held via Zoom due to health and safety concerns related to COVID-19, between February 11-25. A total of six focus groups were complete, with over 60 representatives attending. Those in attendance received a short overview of the proposal by Mayor Seth Fleetwood and Seth Vidaña, Climate and Energy Manager, followed by questions and answers.

The attendees at these focus groups included representatives from organizations, businesses and community groups that can offer valuable perspectives related to the proposed Climate Action Fund, including those that serve vulnerable communities, are involved in energy work, are part of the building and construction industry, provide education, and/or regularly work with community members. There was also one focus group with the Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Committee, that includes representative from each Bellingham neighborhood. Representatives from the following groups were invited to participate in the focus groups:

Architecture 2030	Familias Unidas por la Justicia	Stand.Earth
Associated General Contractors of Washington	Favinger Plumbing	Technology Alliance Group
Bellingham Chamber of Commerce	Front and Centered	Western Solar
Bellingham Parks and Recreation	Habitat for Humanity	Western Washington University – Small Business Development Center and Sustainability Engagement Institute
Bellingham Public Library	Kiwanis Club, Bellingham	Whatcom Business Alliance
Bellingham School District	Lion's Club, Bellingham	Whatcom Community College
Bellingham Technical College	Mercy Housing	Whatcom County Executive Office
Bellingham Tenants Union	Multifaith Network for Climate Justice	Whatcom County Government
Bellingham & Whatcom County Housing Authority	Northwest Agriculture Business Center	Whatcom County Health Department
Building Industry Association of Whatcom County	Northwest Innovation Resource Center	Whatcom Educational Credit Union (WECU)
CAZ Construction	Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association	Whatcom Land Trust
Climate Solutions	Opportunity Council	Whatcom Transportation Authority
Community Food Co-op	Port of Bellingham	Workforce Northwest
Community to Community Development (C2C)	Puget Sound Sage	
Downtown Bellingham Partnership	Recreation Northwest	
Emerald Cities Collaborative	RE Sources	
Fairhaven Association	Sustainable Connections	

## Public Forums

Two public forums were hosted online, via Zoom due to health and safety concerns related to COVID-19, on February 17 and 23 from 7 – 8 p.m. A total of 69 people attended. Those in attendance received the same short presentation as the focus groups, followed by a question-and-answer session, using Zoom’s Q&A tool. The answers to questions that City staff ran out of time to address during the public forums were posted online on Engage Bellingham.

## Engage Bellingham

Starting February 3, 2022, an interactive Engage Bellingham page was created to collect ideas and questions related to the proposed Climate Action Fund. Between Feb. 3 – March 7, there were 647 people who became aware of the project by visiting the page at least once, 223 who went on to become informed by clicking on some elements on the page and 81 who engaged directly by providing an idea or asking a question, with a total of 92 ideas contributed.

All comments received on Engage Bellingham and through the focus groups and public forums were summarized into Themes and Key Issues. The results are in the table below.



*Photo by Grady Haskel*



<b>Theme</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
Energy Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for a variety of renewable energy supply options</li> <li>• Grid reliability necessary for increased demand and power outages</li> <li>• Current electricity supplies for electrification</li> </ul>
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extra support for low-income and essential communities</li> <li>• Equitable representation in decision making</li> <li>• Unintended consequences for vulnerable communities</li> <li>• Proven/reliable method to identify vulnerable communities</li> </ul>
Funding mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All tax or funding options</li> <li>• Reprioritizing current funding, no new taxes</li> <li>• Impacts to affordability</li> <li>• Public-private partnerships</li> </ul>
Adaptation efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on trees and vegetation</li> <li>• Provide public respite locations that serve multiple purposes</li> <li>• Plan infrastructure for climate change impacts</li> </ul>
Program development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider ways to offset costs</li> <li>• Work jointly and collaborate with other jurisdictions and organizations</li> <li>• Be flexible and provide people choices</li> <li>• Include community advisory groups</li> <li>• Provide education</li> <li>• Utilize existing programs and resources</li> </ul>
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in alternative transportation, not just electric vehicles</li> <li>• Support WTA and school district to meet their own climate goals</li> <li>• Include e-bikes and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles</li> </ul>
Jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job training and development</li> <li>• Grow and develop local jobs</li> <li>• Current labor shortages</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity needed about converting from natural gas</li> <li>• Community champions to help with messaging</li> <li>• Address issues people care about</li> <li>• Emphasize the emotional connection</li> </ul>
Need for local funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local taxes are essential</li> <li>• State and Federal funds need to support these efforts</li> <li>• Local taxpayers paying for a global problem is not fair</li> </ul>
Competing community concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rising crime rates</li> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• Public infrastructure improvements</li> </ul>