

3.5 The City of Port Angeles: A Methodical Approach to Engagement and Option Analysis

Located in Washington State, the City of Port Angeles, a community comprised of slightly more than 20,000 residents, sits near the Northwest tip of the continental United States, just north of Olympic National Park. With 26 miles of marine coastline and 17 miles of streams, the city is particularly vulnerable to the combined impacts of rising sea level, storm surge, flooding, and coastal erosion. A locally led grass-roots effort focused on reducing carbon emissions and preparing for climate impacts culminated in a three-year effort to develop a climate resilience plan and its accompanying implementation plan.

How the plan was developed

During Port Angeles' 2016 Comprehensive Plan periodic update, the non-profit group Olympic Climate Action requested the inclusion of climate-related goals and policies. The city responded by including this focus in its strategic planning process; as that process unfolded, the city recognized that a more collaborative effort would be needed. In November 2019, the city engaged Cascadia Consulting Group to work with a recently formed community volunteer group, the Climate Action Planning Group (CAPG), in a joint process to develop recommendations that would become City of Port Angeles Climate Resiliency Plan. Refer to Figure 24 for planning timeline.

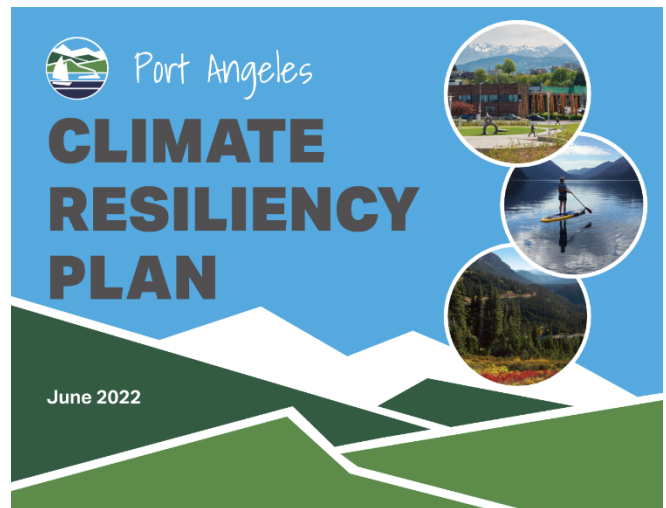


Figure 23: Cover of the Port Angeles' Climate Resiliency Plan



Figure 24: Planning timeline

The city/consultant team began with a community outreach effort. This 2021 document outlined how city staff (with Cascadia's help) would identify and engage community members and groups. It included three goals for its community engagement:

- Goal A: Communicate and empower residents in the climate resiliency planning process by educating and energizing Port Angeles' residents about climate change and the process.
- Goal B: Build and inspire communitywide support for the Climate Resiliency Plan through a transparent, inclusive, and accessible process that is responsive to community concerns.
- Goal C: Support the cohesive and self-sustaining CAPG ready to move forward with plan objectives and future planning efforts.

The combined forces of city planning staff, Cascadia, and CAPG implemented an engagement strategy that included communications materials, public workshops and community meetings, a public survey, pop-up events, meetings with key implementation partners, and briefings at public meetings. By developing a clear strategy on how they would engage the public and which of the three organizing groups would be responsible for each aspect, the Port Angeles team made effective stakeholder engagement the cornerstone of their planning process.

At the end of this process, the team had identified 70 proposed actions; they then used an approach called multi-criteria decision analysis (see sidebar) to refine and filter those ideas into the 55 actions included in the final plan. For each proposed action they characterized the relative impact not just based on its potential to facilitate resilience, but also assessed them using the criteria of equity, affordability, community support, feasibility, and other co-benefits. This consistent and largely data-driven approach made for a transparent process that kept the focus on achievable projects that met the most important criteria. Ben Braudrick, Port Angeles' Planning Advisor described the importance of that approach:

“That’s why I liked multicriteria analysis. Some actions are important but are not the primary mission. We need to use measured criteria so we are not just prioritizing actions based on feelings, interests, or consensus. Having some real specifics that are quantitative and weighted is important.”

Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis

With 70 initial action proposals, Port Angeles needed a way to evaluate and prioritize their options. Cascadia implemented a multi-criteria analysis approach to evaluate actions, working with stakeholders to choose the criteria, specify the metrics to measure them, and assign relative weights to the criteria (see Figure 25). This enabled a data-driven, consistent evaluation and selection process.

Using the resulting criteria, team members scored the projects on a 1 (low priority) to 5 (high priority) scale. A set of evaluators documented a brief rationale for each score based on criteria definitions and metrics, available data, and professional judgement. A separate evaluator mediated a review session to address any discrepancies in scoring between the evaluations to arrive at a consensus




Criteria	Weight	Definition
	25%	Impact: The scope and likelihood that the action will reduce greenhouse gas emissions or enhance resiliency.
	20%	Equity: How the action impacts vulnerability across different populations and addresses historic inequalities; how fairly benefits and costs are distributed across the community.
	20%	Affordability: The affordability for the community and City; the costs of inaction.
	15%	Feasibility: Regulatory, political, or technological constraints related to action implementation as well as the City’s level of control over implementation.
	10%	Community Support: Stakeholder, partner, and resident support.
	10%	Co-benefits: Secondary support for public health, green economy, and healthy natural systems.

Figure 25: Multi-criteria analysis weighting

The draft Climate Resiliency Plan was brought before the Planning Commission in January 2022 and the final plan was approved in June 2022. The effort involved five or six core team members (from the city and other groups), each devoting part of their time over the planning period.

The approved plan provided the city with “what” it would do to improve climate resilience. To ensure that the “how” was clearly in focus, the team then developed an Implementation Plan as an addendum, published in November 2022. The team also developed an amendment to the city’s comprehensive plan, weaving climate and resilience plans into that document. Zach Trevino of the Port Angeles Department of Community and Economic Development explained the importance of that step:

“This integration allows us to approach funding requests with a stronger justification. We can demonstrate that a specific action in our Implementation Plan is consistent with the goals and policies in our Comprehensive Plan, which were themselves informed directly by the Climate Resiliency Plan.”

How the plan will improve resilience

The Port Angeles plan has a strong focus on promoting the city’s self-reliance while lowering costs and generally improving quality of life. The plan is written to be read by community members, to inform them of what actions the city is planning to take to promote climate resiliency while also sharing ways that individuals can contribute to the effort.

The Climate Resiliency Plan includes five areas of focus, each including several goals, strategies, and actions. The focus areas are:

- Community Resilience & Wellbeing
- Ecosystem Health
- Transportation
- Buildings & Energy
- Consumption & Waste

Each area includes indicators, specific data points such as “renewable energy use per capita” and “pH of Port Angeles Harbor and nearby marine waters” to track whether these efforts are having the positive impacts that were estimated during plan development. The Implementation Plan calls out the importance of effective measurement:

“To ensure we are on our pathway to carbon neutrality and a resilient community, we will need to measure our progress and adjust based on what we find. Measuring resilience means measuring our ability to continue to provide for community needs, goods, and services and sustain our quality of life. We have prioritized metrics the city and community already use to track progress and will develop new metrics to monitor and evaluate our performance.”

The Climate Resiliency Implementation Plan also includes clear connections to issues of equity, an important topic to both city staff and project stakeholders. The plan identifies equity priorities, the current barriers to meeting those priorities, and which actions in the plan would help address those equity considerations. The plan also commits the Port Angeles government to tracking key demographic data and geographic distribution of people who receive a service, are enrolled in a program, or are otherwise impacted by an action. This information will be gathered as part of ongoing engagement with stakeholders and the public throughout the implementation process. A plan for continued public and stakeholder

engagement, particularly with communities most likely to be impacted by climate threats, and information gathering will be developed in the next phase of the project.

One of the Implementation Plan’s strengths is its clarity around how projects will happen. The Action Matrix (illustrated in Figure 26) clearly shows which agency is leading each action, what performance indicators will be used, the funding status, funding sources, timeline, and external partners. This clarity not only gives city staff key data for implementation but makes it easy for decision-makers to understand any potential barriers to success.

ID	Action Name	Lead Department(S)	Indicators	Affordability	Funding status	Funding sources	Timeline	Partners
14	CRW-2: Climate resilience & emergency planning	Climate coordinator, DCED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of Community Paramedic contacts that have successful referral to services # of REdisCOVERY contacts that have successful referral to services % of population that can be accommodated in community Safety hubs or other disaster relief centers 		Unfunded Priority	BIL grant: Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT) Program		American Red Cross, mental health services
Equity and other considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need reliable and consistent electricity to run medical devices for those with chronic illnesses. Need a community network for mass disaster communications. 								

Figure 26: Port Angeles action matrix example

Plan Highlights

This plan includes many of the actions we see in other community resilience plans, including updated threat analysis, climate resilience hubs, incentivizing EVs and energy efficiency, among other actions. It also includes some innovative approaches that are less common:

- **A tool to evaluate vulnerability of city assets, projects, and activities.** This tool is to be incorporated into city workflow processes (e.g., permits and expenditures), as well as updates to the Hazard Mitigation Plan and Capital Facilities Plan. This tool extends Port Angeles’ data-driven approach to more concretely identifying and addressing resilience challenges in the city’s management systems and operating processes.
- **Salmon habitat protection.** This action includes working with local ecological restoration partners to monitor and analyze climate change impacts at salmon stream restoration sites at six streams in the city. It identifies the Habitat Recovery Pilot Program as a source of funding to support restoration efforts. While many resilience plans do not focus much on wildlife, the Port Angeles planning team recognized that not only are salmon highly vulnerable to climate impacts, but that a healthy salmon population in the area can be a valuable resource for local food resilience.
- **Community renewable energy grid.** This action proposes exploring and investing in capital projects that develop community energy projects (e.g., local microgrids, local solar projects) to ensure there is energy supply redundancy, especially when the city or its neighborhoods lose power. It includes potential partnerships with the Clallam Public Utility District, so that distributed energy sources can not only improve energy resilience through grid integration, but also can reduce carbon emissions and enhance equity.

Moving forward

The Port Angeles Climate Resiliency Plan is early in its implementation phase. The Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED) is responsible for ongoing plan coordination, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. The Implementation Plan calls out that “Successful implementation of the Plan is dependent on staff capacity, successful partnerships, and budget alignment throughout the duration of

the CRP implementation process.” To ensure consistent focus on the implementation effort, the Climate Resiliency Plan identifies a budget request for a full-time climate resiliency coordinator to provide plan implementation support and oversight as an initial implementation action.

Staff explained how the city is prioritizing what it can do today, trusting that near-term success will build support for incorporating climate resilience projects into future iterations of the city’s overarching plans:

“The way we are approaching plan integration right now is knowing that some actions are going to be a little more feasible with minimal resources than others. Some actions are already funded, while others are not. Some actions have partial funding, so those are the ones that are going to be pursued before unfunded actions... The city is beginning its 2025 Comprehensive Plan amendment process, which is going to better integrate all of this together into a comprehensive approach to climate resiliency. Incorporating climate resiliency actions into our Comprehensive Plan will make it a lot more meaningful when we approach any one of these unfunded implementation actions and try to proceed with funding and implementing it in conjunction with other departments.”

Moving forward, Port Angeles anticipates regular updates to its Climate Resiliency Plan, with even more representative community engagement, and capturing lessons learned from implementation to better target future efforts.

What can we learn from Port Angeles’ resilience planning effort?

Preparing for Greater Integration

Plan developers understood that incorporating their projects into future Port Angeles planning efforts would be a critical step for success. In the plan itself, they used a map logo to identify actions that were well-suited for integration in the next city comprehensive plan update.



The City of Port Angeles took a methodical approach to its climate resiliency planning effort. This included developing an engagement plan, painstaking public outreach work, and use of multi-criteria decision analysis to select actions. But it also took a critical next step: developing an implementation plan to clearly identify who would do what, by when, with what funding, and what impediments would need to be addressed. These combined efforts not only created a data-driven, implementable plan based on best available science, it also created consistent transparency. Anyone could see every element of the process: the criteria and weightings that drove action choices, the agencies responsible for implementation, and the metrics by which the city will measure its success.

This level of transparency took exceptional intention, forethought, and attention to detail, but the plan’s developers saw this as a long-term investment, and thus took the extra care needed to make sure that the resulting investments happened and paid off. Port Angeles also sees its Climate Resiliency Plan as a living document and the associated planning effort as an ongoing activity. The city has built an approach that will make identifying evolving best practices, identifying potential barriers, and updating the plan straightforward as part of staff’s ongoing workload.

Port Angeles has also been effective in planning for long-term success by pushing resilience objectives into city-wide comprehensive planning. Rather than keep resilience efforts an isolated effort, the team worked to incorporate resilience actions into other planning processes, ranging from goals to budgets to zoning. While this effort is still relatively new, it is clear that Port Angeles government, residents, and partners have built a plan that is clear, responsive, and adaptable to whatever comes next.