






BUILDING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
OF CLARK COUNTY

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July 29, 2022

Vancouver City Council
415 W 6th St.
Vancouver, WA 98660

Comments & Inquiries Re: Proposed Climate Action Plan

Dear Mayor Anne McEnery-Ogle and City Council Members,

On behalf of the Building Industry Association of Clark County, and our more than 750 association members, we would like to thank the City of Vancouver and City Council for the opportunity to weigh in on the proposed Climate Action Plan (CAP).

The BIA supports the overarching goal of reducing the City's carbon footprint. While we believe the City Council and City staff have invested substantial resources to developing Vancouver's CAP, we are concerned that there are some critical components missing from the approach.

As a voice for the building and construction industry, our biggest challenges directly affect the livability of Vancouver. First, we are compelled to address the ever-growing need for accessible housing options in a market impacted by unprecedented population growth and an unrealistic land supply outlook.

Second, our industry employs thousands of workers whose families live, work, and play in Vancouver. The employees of the businesses within our association rely on the building, remodeling, engineering, and construction industry for stable and well-paying jobs.

These employers are operating in a highly regulated and rapidly evolving business environment. The cost of operating is increasing, and profit margins are disintegrating often due to the unintended consequences of poorly planned regulations and flawed policy choices. Currently, regulations add an average of \$134,354 to the price of a new home pushing the dream of homeownership further out of reach. The current median home price in Clark County is \$562,869 and is unaffordable to 84 percent of our residents.

The BIA shares the City Council's concern and passion for our environment and reducing our community's carbon footprint. The building and construction industry relies on a healthy and sustainable environment for critical supplies and resources.

We protect the environment by complying with government regulations and deploying industry best practices. Most importantly, we are in the business of providing shelter and critical infrastructure to support the residents in the region. We recognize that our residents need a clean and functioning environment to flourish. However, they also need accessible housing, safe infrastructure, and stable employment.

Good policy choices are well-researched, supported by data, communicated clearly to the community to gain groundswell and support, accompanied by detailed rollout plan, implemented with incremental goals, and built on expert financial analysis for prioritizing the most effective approaches. These elements are currently absent from the proposed CAP.

The BIA would like clarification on these points:

1. While middle housing options provide shelter for many middle-income wage earners, these housing options rarely provide a path to homeownership. Homeownership is one of the greatest avenues to build generational wealth and is often identified as the differentiating factor to break the poverty line. What provisions will the City Council include in the CAP to keep homeownership in reach for middle-income households?
2. The BIA agrees that zoning updates could be an important approach for battling the current housing crisis and allow for more housing with higher walkability scores. How will the City Council and staff collaborate with the building industry to ensure zoning and code updates are impactful and actionable?
3. In the pursuit of electrification, there are issues that may lead to more inequity. We have an aging and inadequate power grid. Transitioning to electrification prior to grid upgrades is putting the cart before the horse. When will an assessment of the grid be done? If upgrades are needed, what is the timeline and budget for the upgrades?

Retrofitting electrification for aging residential and commercial properties is exceedingly more expensive than integrating for new builds. Aging properties are disproportionately owned and occupied by middle- and lower-income individuals. How will the City of Vancouver address this disparity and inequity?

The BIA urges the City Council to:

- Allow more time for the community to evaluate and comment on the proposed CAP.
- Create a tiered rollout plan with defined timelines and milestones as part of the proposed CAP.
- Provide a detailed financial analysis for prioritizing initiatives that have the greatest off-set impact.
- Evaluate each initiative in the proposed CAP through the lens of accessible housing.

The BIA is always available for consultation and as a resource for better policy making and implementation. Thank you for your time in advance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Noelle Lovern", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Noelle Lovern
Government Affairs Director