

Board of County Commissioners



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Heat Mitigation Plan

August 25th, 2026

Background



- AB 96 passed in 2025 Legislative Session
- Required jurisdictions in Washoe and Clark county to create a “Heat Mitigation Plan” in the Conservation Element of the master plan

- AB 96 requires master plan to address:
 - ✓ • Access to public cooling spaces
 - ✓ • Access to public drinking water
 - ✗ • Cool building practices
 - ✓ • Shade over paved surfaces
 - ✗ • Preference for native tree or drought-tolerant species

✓ **Already addressed**

Urban Heat



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- Urban heat islands (UHIs): areas of concentrated heat created by impervious surfaces like buildings, roads, and other paved surfaces that absorb and release heat



Image 1: Urban Heat Island Effect (World Meteorological Organization)

Urban Heat in Washoe County



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- CAPA Heat Mapping project on August 10, 2024
 - 100+ volunteers; 200 sq. miles sampled
- Maximum mapped temperature differential between neighborhoods in the Truckee Meadows: **23 degrees Fahrenheit**
- Found that areas with more sparse suburban development and low tree cover can also concentrate heat in the day and evening
- According to Climate Central based on NOAA data, Reno is the fastest warming city in the US

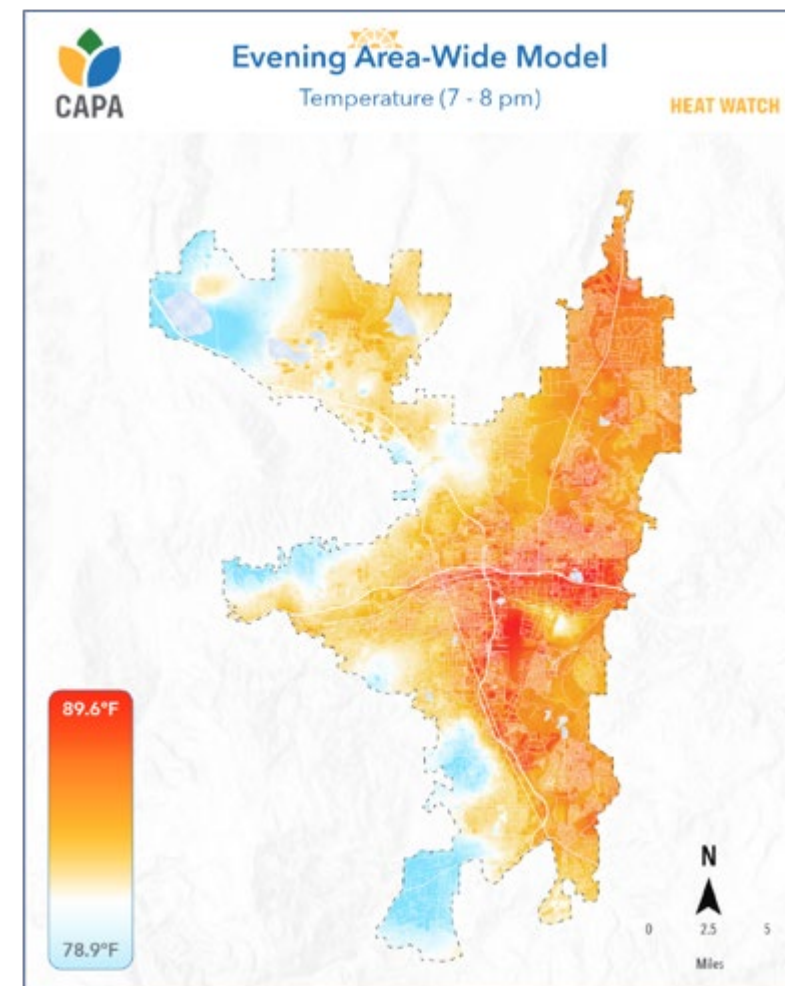


Image 2: Reno-Sparks Heat Map

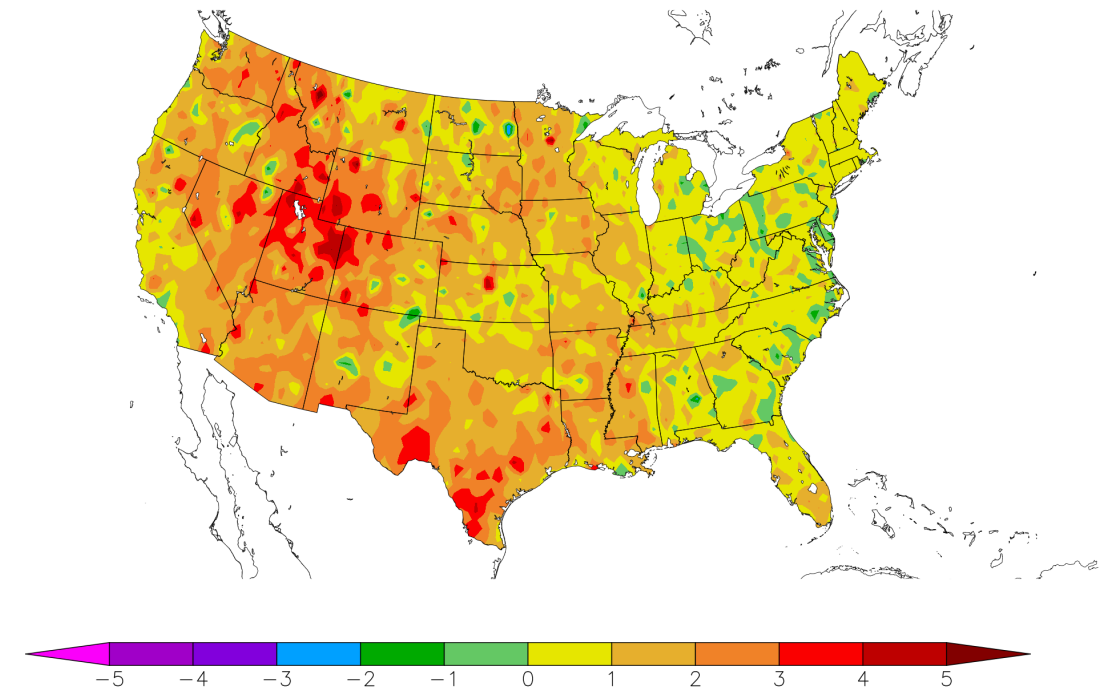
Extreme Heat



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- Rural areas also vulnerable to extreme heat
- Chronic and acute health impacts of heat
- Wide range of potential impacts
 - Economic
 - Public Health
 - Social
 - Agricultural
- Extreme heat events expected to increase

Departure from Normal Temperature (F)
1/1/2025 – 12/31/2025



Generated 1/20/2026 using provisional data.

ACIS Web Services

Image 3: Departure from Normal Temperature Map (2025)



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Overview of Draft Amendments

Summary of Amendments



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- Reorganizing narrative create a “heat mitigation plan” and to address extreme and urban heat
- Modifying and adding policies related to extreme heat mitigation and management
- Using a red sun icon (☀) to mark principles and policies throughout Envision Washoe 2040 that are relevant to extreme heat and part of the heat mitigation plan
- Adding four new action items to Chapter 3

Heat Mitigation Plan Narrative



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- **Reorganize existing information** about urban heat and vulnerable communities
- Add information about extreme heat and its impacts, including:
 - Impacts to ozone, air quality, and attainment of **air quality** standards
 - Impacts to **community character**, including social vibrancy and isolation
 - Risks to and needs of **rural communities**, including water impacts, energy reliability, agricultural impacts, and emergency medical care access
 - Direct and indirect impacts to the **Tahoe Basin**
- Incorporate **2024 CAPA Heat Watch map data** to urban heat section
- Add more detailed information on **tree canopy**
- **Reference relevant plans**, including the 2025 Washoe County Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan, Climate Action Plan, and Regional Transportation Plan

Addition of new principles and policies related to:

- Coordination with **Washoe County Emergency Management**
- Raising **awareness and knowledge** of the impacts of extreme heat
- Working with Reno and Sparks to develop **shared heat management resources** and information
- Increasing **energy supply resiliency**
- Increasing **shade** in strategic places (e.g. transit stops, gathering places of vulnerable populations, etc.)
- Supporting **cool building practices** such as light-colored roofs

Modification of existing principles and policies related to:

- Supporting expansion of the County's **tree canopy** in key community locations and resources
- Promoting **green building materials** such as green roofs and cooling pavements
- **Targeting improvements** in areas with high urban heat island effect

Add three new action items (short-term):

- Create **codes and measurable goals related to tree canopy coverage** with a preference for native tree or drought-tolerant species.
- Assess need for **rural-focused strategies** to manage the impact of extreme heat and, if needed, pursue those strategies.
- Conduct a study to **identify the areas of the county most at-risk from extreme heat** in order to prioritize investment in those areas.

Add one new action item (mid-term):

- Explore **incentives for cool building practices** in the Washoe County Development Code.

- Two neighborhood meetings, one in person and one online (two attendees)
- Online survey (35 responses)
- Revisions based on public input:
 - Additional narrative to address extreme heat in the **Tahoe Basin** and the indirect impacts of extreme heat in the Truckee Meadows on the Tahoe Basin.
 - Additional policy language supporting expanding **tree canopy in the Truckee River corridor**.
 - Additional detail regarding supported **cool building practices**.
 - Revisions to the proposed action items to include **establishing measurable goals** related to tree canopy.
 - Various small amendments to **improve clarity and detail** in the heat mitigation plan narrative.

- Planning Commission on July 7, 2026 voted 5-0 to recommend approval.
- Must make at least **three of five** of the following findings:
 1. Consistency with Master Plan.
 2. Compatible Land Uses.
 3. Response to Change Conditions.
 4. Availability of Facilities.
 5. Desired Pattern of Growth.

Motion - Approval



Move to adopt master plan amendment case number WMPA26-0001, an amendment to the Washoe County Master Plan to create a heat mitigation plan, and further authorize the Chair to sign the resolution contained in Attachment A to this staff report to that effect. In making this motion, I am able to make the five findings made by the Planning Commission in accordance with Washoe County Code Section 110.820.15(d).

Thank you

Kat Oakley, AICP, Planning Manager
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