



WASHOE COUNTY

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STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: AUGUST 25, 2026

DATE: July 24, 2026

TO: Board of County Commissioners

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THROUGH: Kelly Mullin, AICP, Division Director, Planning & Building Division, Community Services Department, 775-328-3619, kmullin@washoecounty.gov

SUBJECT: Public Hearing: Master plan amendment case number WMPA26-0001 (Heat Mitigation Plan). Consideration of the Planning Commission's recommendation to amend Envision Washoe 2040 to create a heat mitigation plan and, if approved, authorize the chair to sign a resolution to this effect, subject to a finding of conformance with the Truckee Meadows Regional Plan by the regional planning authorities.

The Board of County Commissioners may adopt the proposed amendments as presented, may modify the proposed master plan amendment and refer the modified amendment back to the Planning Commission for its report in accordance with NRS 278.220(4), or may deny the proposed amendments after the public hearing. (All Commission Districts.) FOR POSSIBLE ACTION

SUMMARY

The Board is asked to consider a master plan amendment to create a heat mitigation plan as part of Envision Washoe 2040, in compliance with Assembly Bill (AB) 96. The proposed master plan amendments are described in detail beginning on page 2 of this staff report. Additional analysis can be found in Attachment C, Planning Commission staff report.

Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item:

Vulnerable Populations: Support vulnerable populations with a regional approach

PREVIOUS ACTION

July 7, 2026. The Washoe County Planning Commission (PC) reviewed the proposed amendments to Envision Washoe 2040 and voted 5-0 to recommend approval of master plan amendment WMPA26-0001 to the Board. In doing so, the Planning Commission made all five possible findings (three are required) set forth in Washoe County Code Section 110.820.15(d), which are set forth below:

AGENDA ITEM # _____

1. Consistency with Master Plan. The proposed amendment is in substantial compliance with the policies and action programs of the Master Plan.
2. Compatible Land Uses. The proposed amendment will provide for land uses compatible with (existing or planned) adjacent land uses, and will not adversely impact the public health, safety or welfare.
3. Response to Change Conditions. The proposed amendment responds to changed conditions or further studies that have occurred since the plan was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, and the requested amendment represents a more desirable utilization of land.
4. Availability of Facilities. There are or are planned to be adequate transportation, recreation, utility, and other facilities to accommodate the uses and densities permitted by the proposed Master Plan designation.
5. Desired Pattern of Growth. The proposed amendment will promote the desired pattern for the orderly physical growth of the County and guides development of the County based on the projected population growth with the least amount of natural resource impairment and the efficient expenditure of funds for public services.

BACKGROUND

In November of 2023, the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners adopted Envision Washoe 2040, a comprehensive update to Washoe County's master plan. At the time of its adoption, Envision Washoe 2040 complied with all applicable state requirements. In the 2025 Nevada Legislative Session, AB 96 was enacted which required the addition of a "heat mitigation plan" to the Conservation Element of certain jurisdictions, including Washoe County. The heat mitigation plan must cover specific topics, including, "access to public cooling spaces, public drinking water, cool building practices, shade over paved surfaces and other mitigation measures to address heat in the community." An assessment of Envision Washoe 2040 revealed that the master plan already covered several of the elements required by AB 96; however, in order to address gaps and to more explicitly and comprehensively address urban and extreme heat, the subject master plan amendment is proposed.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Proposed amendments occur throughout Envision Washoe 2040 and fall within the following categories:

- Reorganizing narrative sections to 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.

Amendments are summarized in this section and a full redline of proposed changes is included in Exhibit B of Attachment C.

Heat Mitigation Plan Narrative

The Adaptation and Resiliency portion of the Conservation Element of Envision Washoe 2040 already contained considerable narrative addressing urban heat. However, in order to more comprehensively address the impacts of heat on both urban and rural areas, the information was reorganized and augmented with new details related to:

- Impacts to ozone, air quality, and attainment of air quality standards
- Impacts to the character of the community, including social vibrancy, social isolation, and agriculture
- Risks to and needs of rural communities, including water impacts, energy reliability, and emergency medical care access
- The benefits of an expanded tree canopy
- Direct and indirect impacts from extreme heat, including increased visitation to the Tahoe Basin
- Data from the 2024 CAPA Heat Watch program, which mapped urban heat in the Reno-Sparks area of Washoe County (see Figure 1)
- References to other plans relevant to extreme heat

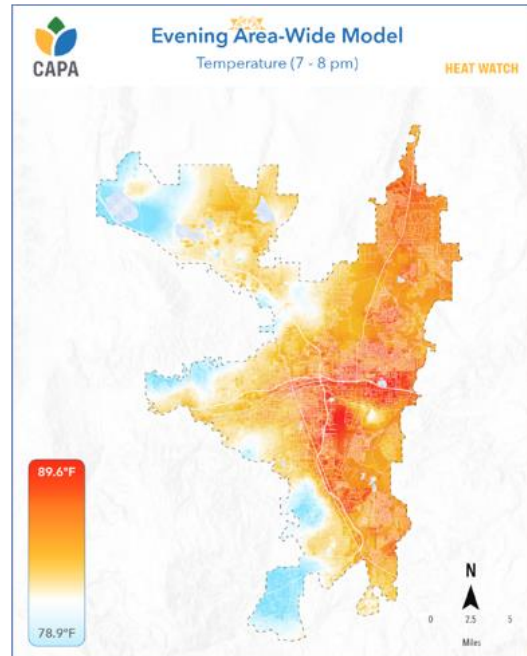


Figure 1 CAPA Heat Map

Amended and New Policies

Extreme heat influences and is influenced by many different aspects of the built environment and community life, so it is no surprise that policies throughout Envision Washoe 2040 are relevant to a heat mitigation plan, including in the regional form and coordination, land use, and transportation elements. However, most relevant policies, existing and proposed, are found in the adaptation and resiliency element, a subsection of the required conservation element. Several existing policies focus on mitigating the impacts of climate change, which includes extreme heat. In order to strengthen Envision Washoe 2040, some of these policies are amended to specifically address extreme heat. Furthermore, a new principle and several policies are proposed to address managing the impacts of extreme heat, covering topics such as:

- Supporting the expansion of the County's tree canopy and other sources of shade, with a focus on vulnerable communities and key community resources
- Raising awareness of extreme heat and its impacts
- Collaborating with local partners to develop and map public cooling and drinking water resources
- Supporting resilient energy supply networks
- Exploring rural-focused extreme heat management strategies

- Supporting cool building practices

Action Items

Chapter 3 of Envision Washoe 2040 contains a series of implementation actions, broken into four categories: immediate and ongoing (0-3 years), short-term (0-5 years), mid-term (5-10 years), and long-term (10-20). As with the principles and policies in Chapter Two, there are many existing actions related to extreme heat, and those actions are modified as needed and marked with a red sun icon as part of the heat mitigation plan. To implement existing and proposed policies, four additional action items are proposed:

- Short-term action items:
 - 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.
- Mid-term action item:
 - Explore incentives for cool building practices in the Washoe County Development Code.

FISCAL IMPACT

No fiscal impact.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

To seek feedback on the draft heat mitigation plan, staff hosted two neighborhood meetings—one in person and one digital—and released an online survey. Two members of the public attended the neighborhood meetings. The online survey received 35 responses, which are attached as Exhibit D of Attachment C. Respondents expressed many concerns related to extreme heat, many mentioning impacts to water and wells, paved surfaces increasing heat, energy costs and reliability, and health impacts, particularly to vulnerable populations such as seniors and children. A few respondents offered specific comments on the draft amendments, some stating that they thought such a plan was not necessary and others expressing that the plan should be broader and address pollution and carbon emissions. Respondents generally supported limiting urban sprawl and increasing green space and canopy cover.

In response to public input, the following revisions were made:

- 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 the tree canopy in the Truckee River corridor.
- Additional detail regarding supporting 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.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners adopt and authorize the Chair to sign the resolution contained as Attachment A to this staff report to amend Envision Washoe 2040 as set forth in master plan amendment case number WMPA26-0001, subject to a favorable conformance review by the Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Commission.

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with the Planning Commission's recommendation, a possible motion would be:

“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).

Attachments:

- A. Master Plan Amendment Resolution
- B. Planning Commission Action Order and Signed Resolution
- C. Planning Commission Staff Report for WMPA26-0001
- D. Planning Commission Staff Presentation
- E. Recording of July 7, 2026 Planning Commission Public Hearing