



Funds Distribution Report

Recipient Organization:
Futurewise

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Organization's General Goals:

Futurewise works throughout Washington state to encourage healthy, equitable and opportunity-rich communities — and to protect our most valuable farmlands, forests, and water resources through wise land use policies and practices.

Date of Award:	Level:
2025 Q2	\$2,501 to \$5,000

For more information, please read the attached report from Futurewise.

8802 27th Ave NE
Tulalip, WA 98271
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FINAL REPORT TO TULALIP TRIBES CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS

October 2025 – August, 31 2026

Q2 2025 14.2

www.futurewise.org

Number of people impacted: 868,765 (population of Snohomish County 2025)

This is the final report for the grant given to Futurewise in October 2025 until September 2026 for work in Snohomish County, focusing on Snohomish County's 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update and other land use issues that impact water quality, climate change, wildlife habitat, housing affordability, food systems, salmon recovery, transportation, and racial equity.

Funding from the Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund supported Futurewise's work to begin implementation of three new policies from the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update, and work on ensuring the county adopted new critical areas regulations using Best Available Science. Our work on these plans aimed to improve water quality in the Sauk, Skagit, Stillaguamish, and Snohomish river basins, as well as protect wildlife habitat throughout the county.

During the grant period, Futurewise activated 2,963 supporters in Snohomish County who contacted decision-makers regarding the critical areas regulations. We worked with our supporters to advocate for new regulations that best protected the county's critical areas, especially focusing on fish and wildlife habitat, wetlands and riparian areas. comprehensive plan that concentrated growth, reduced sprawl, protected rural character and water quality.

The process has not yet been resolved, as an appeal of several of the regulations the county council adopted to the Growth Management Hearings Board has yet to be completely resolved. We will continue this work through the end of 2026, and if need be, into 2027. The implementation of three new policies we advocated for during the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update has had a slow start in 2026, but we have been involved with county staff and the county council as they begin their biannual budget process this fall in hopes of securing funding to implement these policies, especially the Urban Tree Canopy policies that we were successful in getting passed in 2024, and will be our number one priority as the implementation process continues into 2027 and beyond. Below is our summary of actions taken for this grant.

Issue 1—Implementation of the Urban Tree Canopy Policies

Goal:

The Snohomish County 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update adopted the new Urban Tree Canopy Policies. These policies were spearheaded by Futurewise and the League of Women Voters of Snohomish County. The GMA requires that the county begin work this year on the



implementation of these policies. The League of Women Voters is stepping down as a co-lead on this issue, and Futurewise will be taking the lead to work with Snohomish County planners and the County Executive to ensure the new regulations will indeed implement the intent of the policies. We anticipate this will be a process that will go on for several years, and the county has not yet given us a draft timeline. But Futurewise needs to keep our membership and the coalition of groups that supported the policies educated and advised so everyone is ready when it is time to give comments and feedback on proposed regulations. These policies have the potential to reduce storm water runoff, to protect watersheds in the urban areas, and to reduce the urban heat island effect.

Outcome:

The county planning department took the lead on working with other departments that would be affected by these new policies to determine what actions needed to be taken and what they determined the cost to the county would be to implement the policies. After months of meeting with county staff to voice our opinions and concerns and to hear what they were proposing, four budget plans were sent to the County Executive for review before being sent to the County Council for their budget process which begins in September and will be decided before the end of the year. The four budget plans are:

1. **Proposed Budget 0: Reduction.** Proposed Budget 0 reflects a scenario in which no new budget is provided to fund additional programming and funding is not designated to continue funding existing programs, such as the Healthy Forest Project and the Land Conservation Strategy. This budget proposes extremely limited to no current staffing reprioritizations to implement the UTC subelement, except for in cases of continuing to work on existing funded programs and interdepartmental and interjurisdictional coordination.
2. **Proposed Budget 1: Conservative Approach.** Proposed Budget 1 offers a more conservative approach to planning for implementation through 2028, that leverages the County's existing departments, staff and programs. Due to a likely shortfall in Snohomish County's budget, Budget 1 plans for no additional funding being allocated to UTC subelement implementation through 2028. Despite this shortfall, the County has been meeting many policies through already existing programs, regulations, and staff time dedicated towards protecting and planting urban tree canopy, however the HFP would not be included in 2027-2028 implementation.
3. **Proposed Budget 2: Moderate Approach.** Proposed Budget 2 provides strategies for possible funding requests for the next biennial budget that allow the county to meet more of the policy requirements than proposed under budget 0 and 1. This proposal assumes that some funds would be available to further implement the UTC subelement, in addition to the strategies to utilize existing resources that are proposed in Budget 1. This approach highlights areas where additional funding could make the greatest impact in UTC subelement implementation.
4. **Proposed Budget 3: Robust Approach.** The Budget 3 robust approach estimates a scenario in which staff, program costs, and consultant costs are provided to more fully implement the UTC subelement. This proposal assumes that the strategies to implement



the policies with existing resources in Budget 1 are met. This approach estimates the ideal staffing and budget resources towards implementing all facets of the UTC subelement within an escalated timeframe. However, certain aspects, such as full development of the Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP), would likely not be completed within the 2027-2028 biennial budget and require implementation beyond 2028. The proposed Budget 3 approach would fully prepare the County fully meet all UTC subelement requirements if the proposed budget is continued past the 2027-2028 biennial budget.

We met with County Executive Dave Somers and Council Member Megan Dunn, who championed with us the Urban Tree Canopy Policies during the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update to discuss these four plans after they were released by the county planning department. We advocated for Proposed Budget 3 to be funded this year for several reasons: First, trees are needed to protect people, property, and salmon habitat from increased storm intensities and temperatures due to climate change. Second, while this is the most expensive plan to fund, costs will continue to rise and the cost of implementation will become even more expensive to fund during the next biannual budget process in 2028. Third, the costs associated with some of the implementation efforts could most likely be reduced as well, and we suggested our continued work with the county to find ways the community could get more involved to help reduce these costs as well. While it was made clear from both Somers and Dunn that full funding may be impossible to achieve, we then suggested funding half of Proposed Budget 3 this year, and the other half in 2028.

Under all four scenarios, there are many actions the county can take that do not require funding and can start to be implemented immediately. We will continue to work on immediate implementation.

Issue 2—Implementation of Agriculture and Forest Lands protections and additions

Goal:

As part of Snohomish County's 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update, several new policies were adopted to better protect working farms and forests. The first set of these two natural resource lands policies directs Snohomish County Planning Department to research rural designated lands that are currently being used as agricultural or forest lands, in order to evaluate if these lands should be redesignated and rezoned from rural to agricultural and forest lands of long-term commercial significance natural resource lands. Snohomish County has lost significant amounts of upland agricultural land and forest land to development. This policy seeks to protect these lands from rural residential development and urban growth area expansions. The second set of these natural resource lands policies direct the Snohomish County Planning Department to review the current zoning for agriculture and forest lands, and suggest new designations and zoning and other measures to better protect our existing natural resource lands. This is a crucial issue for Futurewise, and we have advocated for these changes for many years. Kristin, our consultant, would watchdog and work with the planners and the County



Executive for strong protections and new resource lands designations for Snohomish County, and educate and activate our membership and other interested parties in our advocacy.

Outcome:

Kristin has attended several Agricultural Advisory Board meetings, and introduced the new policies and spoke briefly talked with the members that this is an important issue for Futurewise for implementation. Futurewise believes it is important to work with the county's advisory boards to ensure speedy and strong implementation regulations that will best protect the county's designated agriculture and forest lands. I've been invited to present to the Agricultural Advisory Board our recommendations. This will be a high priority for Futurewise into 2027. We also plan on doing an extensive outreach to other county organizations, groups and individuals to get the regulations moving forward for approval to the county council. Our recommendations will include changing the minimum acreage for farms from 10 acres to 40 acres, reviewing rural lands that are currently being farmed as being added to the commercial designated lands for future protection. Futurewise is also advocating for reducing residential development on forest lands of long-term commercial significance to protect forest resources and to better protect salmon habitat.

Issue 3—Critical Area Regulations Update

Goal:

As mandated by the Growth Management Act, Snohomish County is required to update their Critical Area Regulations by the end of 2025. Critical areas regulations are required to protect wetlands, aquifers, fish and wildlife habitats and ecosystems, frequently flooded areas, and geologically hazardous areas from adverse impacts and to protect people and property from natural hazards. Snohomish County started that process in 2024, and Futurewise was involved at the beginning. We have sent in numerous comment letters and organized our membership and other coalition partners, which includes supporting the position of the Tulalip Tribes, in support of strong regulations based on Best Available Science. We have submitted comment letters and testified to the Planning Commission during their public hearing in 2024, and then to the County Council at their public hearing in January 2025. We are advocating for wider stream buffers, protecting the habitats of all state priority habitats and species, and protecting rare plant species and habitats. The council has not adopted the updated critical areas regulations, and several of the council members are working toward weakening the critical areas regulations.

Since the public hearing in January, the council put together a panel discussion of stakeholders and experts to talk about how to protect wetlands, streams and fish and wildlife while providing for affordable housing needs. Futurewise and the Tulalip Tribes were invited participants and made clear that we can both protect critical areas and provide needed housing.

Outcome:

Futurewise spent many hours and resources organizing around this important issue. We were successful in getting 2,963 emails sent to the council with many organizations and individuals





testifying at the Planning Commission and County Council hearings. Some of these organizations included the Tulalip Tribes, Sno-Isle Sierra Club, Pilchuck Audubon Society, League of Women Voters of Snohomish County, Adopt-A-Stream, who all worked together advocating for strong protections based on best available science.

This advocacy resulted in important improvements to the critical areas regulations. These improvements include the following. Snohomish County designated State of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife priority habitats and species as protected fish and wildlife conservation areas. The county designated and protected rare plant categories and listings from the Department of Natural Resources, Natural Heritage Program as protected habitats. The critical areas regulations require the replacement of wetland functions and values lost to development. Formerly, small category III and IV did not require mitigation if the functions and values were adversely impacted.

While these and other improvements to the critical areas regulations substantially improved protections for salmon and other fish and wildlife habitats, the county did not finish the job. The county's own critical areas monitoring report documented that there had been a net loss of critical area functions and values including riparian habitats. The State of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's new analysis estimated "*roughly 15,000 acres of existing forest providing riparian functions within SPTH buffers could be at risk of loss if the*" riparian buffers in the critical areas regulations update were not updated. The County failed to protect the 15,000 acres of riparian habitat, so Futurewise, joined by Pilchuck Audubon Society, the Adopt A Stream Foundation, the League of Women Voters of Snohomish County, and Sno-Isle Sierra Club, appealed the critical areas regulations to the Growth Management Hearings Board, a state agency that hears claims that comprehensive plans and critical areas regulations do not comply with the Growth Management Act (GMA). Futurewise provided the legal services for the appeal. After briefing and oral argument, the Board agreed with Futurewise and its partners that the critical areas regulations violated the GMA.

The Board gave the county until the end of 2026 to bring the critical areas regulations into compliance with the GMA. Futurewise has been monitoring the county's work. Futurewise will continue to organize and activate our membership and other interested individuals and organizations who support better protections for salmon habitat and riparian habitats based on best available science to advocate for protecting the at risk 15,000 acres of riparian habitat. A timeline for completion of this update has not been released yet by Snohomish County, but we anticipate it will be completed sometime in late 2025.

After the county completes its update, Futurewise will participate before the Growth Management Hearings Board to determine if the compliance work complies with the GMA. The Board will make this determination in February or March 2027.

This is the first Growth Management Hearings Board decision where a county was found to violate the Growth Management Act because it did not incorporate the Washington State





Department of Fish and Wildlife recommendation to adopt stream and riparian buffers the width of one 200-year site-potential tree height (SPTH) measured from the edge of the active channel or active floodplain. These buffers are needed to stop the declines in salmon stocks and to protect the southern resident orcas. These buffers are supported by new best available science. This decision will better protect salmon habitat in Snohomish County and throughout Washington.

While these three goals were the priority of Futurewise, there were other issues that came up that our representative Kristin Kelly worked on. She is a member of Climate Action Committee, a non-binding network of organizations, groups and individuals throughout Snohomish County working on climate change issues. She also commented on and has advocated for protection of our resource and rural lands that have come under threat this year, such as allowing religious facilities on commercially designated agricultural land, and large data centers, which currently are in a temporary moratorium.

Conclusion

Futurewise is grateful for the continued support of the Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund for supporting our advocacy in Snohomish County to advance livable communities and protect the county's rural areas, and fish and wildlife habitat from sprawl. In 2026 and 2027, Futurewise's work in Snohomish County to protect water quality will include continued advocacy on the Critical Areas regulations to protect salmon habitat, implementation of the Urban Tree Canopy policies and for better protection of the county's agriculture and forest lands with the possibility of increasing protected lands of existing lands.

We look forward to continued collaboration.

Thank you,

Alex Brennan
Executive Director

