

# CLIMATE ASSESSMENTS

## UPDATES TO TEMPLATES, CHECKLISTS, AND PROCESS

### Description

Planning Staff recommend updates to the templates, checklists, and process used to perform and transmit climate assessments, based on changes made as a result of Bill 24-25 that combined the elements of community resilience and adaptive capacity into community climate resilience, and allowed the Board to identify a designee to transmit climate assessments.

Updates to Climate  
Assessments  
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**SUMMARY**

- The County Council enacted Bill 34-25, Legislative Process – Climate Assessments – Amendments on March 3, 2026, and it takes effect June 10, 2026.
- The Bill amended code Section 2-81D to combine community resilience and adaptive capacity into one term – community climate resilience. The Bill also allows the Planning Board to have a designee transmit climate assessments to the Council.
- Planning Staff have drafted updates to the climate assessment templates and the checklists used to perform climate assessments. Planning Staff also propose identifying the Planning Director, or the Chief of the Environment and Climate Division, as a designee.

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## SECTION 1 – BACKGROUND

Bill 34-25, Legislative Process – Climate Assessments – Amendments, was introduced on November 4, 2025, by Councilmembers Balcombe and Luedtke, and cosponsored by Councilmember Alborno. The Bill was enacted on March 11, 2026, and will take effect on June 10, 2026 (Attachment A).

When County Code section 2-81D, Climate Assessments, was added by Bill 3-22 in 2022, it required the preparation of climate assessments for Bills, ZTAs, and Master Plans. All climate assessments had to include a quantitative or qualitative evaluation of the effects, if any, on greenhouse gas emissions, sequestration and drawdown, community resilience, and adaptive capacity. The code, however, did not define these elements, and the operational definitions adopted by OLO and Montgomery Planning for community resilience and adaptive capacity were similar but different.

Bill 34-25 was drafted to standardize reviews of climate assessments by combining the elements of community resilience and adaptive capacity into a single new category called community climate resilience and providing a clear definition within the code. This was defined as *the sustained ability of a network of people to use available resources to withstand, respond, recover, and adapt to future climate hazards*. The Bill also provided new, clear definitions for greenhouse gas emissions, carbon drawdown, and sequestration. Lastly, the Bill allows the Planning Board to designate a designee to transmit climate assessments to the Council.

These changes, especially the creation of the new community climate resilience category, necessitate an update to the templates and checklists (Attachment B, 1-4) used by Planning Staff in performing climate assessments, which can be found on the Planning Department's [Climate Assessment website](#).

## SECTION 2 – UPDATES TO DOCUMENTS

### TEMPLATES

Montgomery Planning maintains two climate assessment templates: one for master plans and one for zoning text amendments. Both are similar in layout and include sections that describe purpose, summary, and anticipated impacts resulting from the master plan or zoning text amendment. These templates assist Planning Staff in writing the final climate assessment and have been updated to remove any references to community resilience or adaptive capacity, instead using the term community climate resilience.

### CHECKLISTS

Montgomery Planning also maintains two checklists that are used by Planning Staff to assist in completing the climate assessment. These checklists are a comprehensive but not exhaustive list of climate factors that could be positively or negatively impacted based on recommendations of a master plan or a zoning text amendment. One checklist contains factors related to greenhouse gas emissions and sequestration. The other checklist contains factors related to community resilience and

adaptive capacity. The checklist for community resilience and adaptive capacity is being renamed the checklist for community climate resilience. Planning Staff also looked at both checklists to see if the updated definitions required a reconsideration of the checklist factors, including whether any factors in the community climate resilience checklist became redundant or irrelevant with the changes. Because community climate resilience is intended to represent a blend of both community resilience and adaptive capacity, it was determined that the factors and the way the checklists are organized are still appropriate.

The checklist for greenhouse gas emissions only has one minor update, adjusting the opening narrative reference to the companion checklist of community climate resilience. The other checklist, renamed the community climate resilience checklist, has more edits, including:

- updating the narrative text to say community climate resilience
- removing the adaptive capacity heading, but keeping the adaptive capacity factors subsection
- clarifying that the factors within the checklist should be evaluated based on their relevance to climate impacts.

## SECTION 3 – UPDATES TO PROCESS

The other impactful update in Bill 34-25 was an amendment allowing the Planning Board or the Board’s designee to transmit climate assessments to the Council. Until this point, only the Planning Board was authorized to do the transmittal. Having a designee transmit the climate assessment provides Planning Staff the flexibility towards completing and transmitting the assessments.

### BOARD DESIGNEE

In addition to changes to the definitions and required analysis to be performed with a climate assessment, Bill 34-25 also allows the Planning Board to select a designee to transmit climate assessments. Being able to have a designee to the transmittal has a positive impact on Planning Staff’s timeline for conducting the assessments (discussed more below). Planning Staff recommends that the Board designate either the Planning Director or the Division Chief of the Environment and Climate Division as a designee for climate assessments. Allowing for staff designees also improves coordination between the Planning Staff in the Environment and Climate Division who perform the climate assessments with the District Council and Council Staff receiving the assessments.

### PROCESS CHANGES

If the Board approves a designee to transmit climate assessments on its behalf, this would improve Montgomery Planning’s process and timeline for conducting and transmitting the assessments. The timeline for transmitting climate assessments to the Council is not the same timeline required for transmitting comments on the ZTA itself. Planning Board analysis of ZTAs is only required to be transmitted to the Council ‘prior’ to the public hearing. However, the climate assessment code

requires transmittal of the assessments no later than one week prior to the District Council public hearing on a ZTA or master plan. The Council Public Hearings are on Tuesdays, and the Board's hearings are on Thursdays.

For the Board to review and approve the transmittal of a climate assessment, the Board must consider the climate assessment (and associated ZTA) nine days prior to the Council hearing. Accounting for posting of the staff report and draft climate assessment to the Board's website at least one week before the Board hearing, Planning Staff often has as little as two weeks from introduction of a ZTA to when a draft staff report and climate assessment must be completed. Allowing a designee to transmit the climate assessment provides an additional week of Planning Staff time to conduct its analysis and draft the climate assessment and staff report, since Planning Staff can bring ZTAs to the Board a week closer to the Council hearing.

To ensure the Board and the public remain informed on the content of the climate assessments, Planning Staff would still post the transmitted climate assessment as an attachment to the ZTA staff report. If the Board or the public wanted to comment on the climate assessment, that can still be captured and transmitted as part of the comments on the ZTA.

## SECTION 4 – CONCLUSION

Planning Staff recommends that the Planning Board support the proposed changes to Montgomery Planning's templates, checklists, and process for climate assessments consistent with Bill 34-25, and designate the Planning Director and the Chief of the Environment and Climate Division as Board designees for climate assessments.

## SECTION 5 – ATTACHMENTS

*Attachment A: Bill 34-25*

*Attachment B1 – Updated checklist GHG emissions and sequestration*

*Attachment B2 – Updated checklist community climate resilience*

*Attachment B3 – Updated template for master plans*

*Attachment B4 – Updated template for ZTAs*