



Public Participation Plan

June 2014

The City of Bellingham is in the process of updating its 2006 Comprehensive Plan as required by the State Growth Management Act (GMA). The new plan will provide a 20-year roadmap for Bellingham's growth and development. The GMA requires local governments to develop a Public Participation Plan (Plan). This Plan addresses how the City will meet the requirements for early and continuous public participation.

In addition to complying with the GMA, periodic review and update of the City's Comprehensive Plan and development regulations provide the City with the opportunity to evaluate and reconsider local needs, update the population and employment growth forecasts and other information in the plan, and address changes in state law. The Comprehensive Plan update will build on the visions, goals and policies in the existing Bellingham Comprehensive Plan, incorporating updated and consolidated language where necessary. On or before June 30, 2016, the City is required to complete the update to ensure compliance with the GMA.

Goals

- Provide information to assist the public and stakeholders in understanding issues;
- Seek early and continuous involvement of the public and stakeholders;
- Offer opportunities for the public and stakeholders to provide feedback to staff and appointed and elected officials;
- Make the process accessible and engaging to the public and stakeholders;
- Support community-driven planning;
- Highlight projects implemented since the last Comprehensive Plan update;
- Use a flexible, phased approach; and
- Incorporate/consolidate relevant visions, goals and policies from the existing Comprehensive Plan.

Members of the Public and Stakeholders (not an all-inclusive list)

Community Members

Residents
Neighborhood associations
Employees
Students
Seniors
Key community influencers (TBD)

Regulatory

Washington State Department of Commerce
City Council
Planning Commission

Advisory to City Council and/or Mayor

Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Group (MNAC)
Transportation Commission
Historic Preservation Commission
Arts Commission
Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

Other Public Agencies

Port of Bellingham
Western Washington University
Whatcom County Planning and Development Services
Whatcom County Public Health Department
Public Development Authority
Whatcom Transportation Authority
Bellingham School District
Local Fire Districts (4, 8, South Whatcom Fire Authority)
Public Utility Districts of Whatcom County (1, 2, 3)
Whatcom County Water Districts (2, 7, Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District)
Lummi Nation

Social Service Agencies

Opportunity Council
United Way
Northwest Youth Services
Salvation Army
Interfaith Community Health Center
LAW Advocates
Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center
Kulshan Community Land Trust
Rainbow Recovery Center
Volunteer Center of Whatcom County

Business/Development

Building Industry Association
Association of Realtors
Northwest Economic Council
Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber of Commerce
Center for Economic Vitality
Technology Alliance Group
NW Workforce Development Council
Small Business Development Center
Employers

Arts/Culture/Hospitality

- Museums
- Libraries
- Theaters
- Art Galleries
- Farmers Market
- Tourism Bureau

Community Organizations

- Sustainable Connections
- Futurewise
- Conservation Northwest
- RE Sources

Public Participation Plan Phases

The objective of this Plan is to establish how the City will engage the public and stakeholders during the course of the Comprehensive Plan update. A range of public participation strategies will be employed to encourage and facilitate widespread community participation in the planning process. The Plan is flexible and may be refined as the review process progresses.

Phase 1: Summer 2014

Launch the public participation process

During Phase 1, staff will begin to review the visions, goals and policies in the existing Comprehensive Plan and consolidate redundant information where needed. The public and stakeholders will be introduced to the plan update process at the June 19 Planning Commission meeting and June 23 City Council meeting, and asked to prioritize the plan's visions, goals and policies via a survey.

Tactics:

Stakeholder List

Staff will maintain a list of interested members of the public and stakeholders who will be notified of meetings and other information related to the update process via email.

Planning Commission and City Council

Staff will present information on the update process and Public Participation Plan during the June 19 Planning Commission meeting and June 23 City Council meeting. The public and stakeholders will be notified of the meetings via the City's website and the Bellingham Herald.

Online survey

An online survey will be distributed during the fall of 2014 to assess community priorities. The visions, goals and policies in the existing Comprehensive Plan will serve as a starting point when developing the survey questions. City staff will take the lead in its development. Members of the public and stakeholders will be notified of the survey via email, the City's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/cityofbellingham>), the Bellingham Herald, and fliers that will be posted in strategic locations throughout the City.

Hard copy of survey

Questions from the online survey will be transferred to a hard copy format and distributed to neighborhood association presidents, MNAC, and other interested groups. These groups will circulate the

survey to their members. Survey respondents will return the survey to their group contact person or City staff.

Webpage

All materials associated with the plan update, including a list of frequently asked questions, will be posted on a project-specific webpage (www.cob.org/compplan) on the City's website. Additionally, feature stories will be posted on the homepage of the City's website.

Facebook page

Process updates and notice of public meetings will be posted on the City's Facebook page.

Fliers

Fliers advertising the survey and public meetings will be posted in strategic locations throughout the City, including City-owned sites and other key venues.

Press Releases and Media Advertisements

The City will issue press releases and advertise the survey and public meetings in the Bellingham Herald and on the local cable television channel, BTV10.

Phase 2: 2014-2015

Incorporate feedback into the draft Comprehensive Plan

In Phase 2, feedback gathered through the Planning Commission and City Council meetings, survey and other means (e.g. emails, Facebook page, letters, etc.) will be incorporated into the draft Comprehensive Plan. Staff will present the draft language to relevant City advisory boards and commissions, as well as focus groups comprised of subject-area experts.

Tactics:

City advisory boards and commissions

City advisory boards and commissions will be engaged throughout the update process as needed. These groups, including MNAC, the Transportation Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, and Parks and Recreation Advisory Group, will review and provide feedback on components of the draft plan (e.g. transportation, land use, environment, etc.). Results of the survey, as well as other public input, will also be shared with the groups.

Focus groups

Four to six technical experts per topic will provide an avenue for discussion of the plan's main topic areas that aren't represented through the City's existing advisory boards or commissions (e.g. land use and the environment). The focus groups will review and provide input into relevant draft plan chapters. Results of the survey, as well as other public input, will also be shared with the groups.

Other resources:

Webpage

Facebook page

Stakeholder list

Phase 3: 2015

Finalize the updated Comprehensive Plan

Staff will finalize draft versions of all chapters of the Comprehensive Plan during Phase 3. An open house will provide the public and stakeholders with an opportunity to see the draft plan prior to the Planning Commission public hearing. Relevant City advisory boards and commissions will develop recommendations that will be forwarded to the Planning Commission. The focus groups will have an opportunity to review the work, as well.

Tactics:

Open House

An open house will be utilized to present the draft updated Comprehensive Plan to the public and stakeholders prior to the start of the legislative process. Staff will provide an overview of the process to date; draft visions, goals and policies; and next steps. Notice of this meeting will be provided through such methods as a press release, the Bellingham Herald, the City's website, the City's Facebook page and the stakeholder list.

Other resources:

City advisory boards and commissions

Focus groups

Webpage

Facebook page

Stakeholder list

Fliers

Press releases/media advertisements

Phase 4: 2015-2016

Start and complete the legislative process (adopt the plan)

Phase 4 consists of the legislative process, which includes Planning Commission and City Council public hearings. The process will culminate in the adoption of a new Comprehensive Plan by the GMA deadline of June 30, 2016.

Tactics:

Planning Commission Public Hearing and Work Sessions

The Planning Commission will conduct a public hearing to gather public comment on the draft Comprehensive Plan before developing findings of fact, conclusions and recommendations that will be forwarded to City Council. Public notice of the public hearing will be published in the Bellingham Herald and on the City's website at least 30 days prior to the date of the hearing. Several Planning Commission work sessions will be held after the initial public hearing. In addition to the required noticing procedures, notice will also be provided through such means as a press release, the City's Facebook page and the stakeholder list.

City Council Planning Committee

The City Council's Planning Committee will periodically review and discuss the Comprehensive Plan update. All meeting dates and materials will be posted on the City's website.

City Council Public Hearing and Work Sessions

The City Council will conduct a public hearing to gather public input on the draft plan forwarded by the Planning Commission. Public notice of the public hearing will be published in the Bellingham Herald and

on the City’s website at least 30 days prior to the date of the hearing. Several City Council work sessions will be held after the initial public hearing. In addition to the required noticing procedures, notice will also be provided through such means as a press release, the City’s Facebook page and the stakeholder list.

Other resources:

Webpage

Facebook page

Stakeholder list

Contact Information

Written comments are welcome at any time during the Comprehensive Plan update process. To be considered for the Planning Commission and City Council public hearings, formal written comments should be submitted by the deadline included in the public notice information. Staff will publish all formal comments, in addition to staff’s responses, on the City’s website prior to public hearings and work sessions. To find out more about the Public Participation Plan and to comment on the draft Comprehensive Plan, please contact Greg Aucutt, AICP, interim planning director, or Lisa Pool, AICP, senior planner, at the contact information listed below.

Planning and Community Development Department

210 Lottie Street

Bellingham, WA 98225

Phone: 360-778-8300

Fax: 360-778-8302

Email: Greg Aucutt gaucutt@cob.org

Lisa Pool lapool@cob.org

To be notified of up-coming meetings and process updates, send an email to: compplan@cob.org.

All documents related to the Plan update are located here: www.cob.org/compplan.