

# GOAL 1: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT BACKGROUND REPORT

**PURPOSE:** To provide opportunities for community members to participate in all phases of the planning process, to keep the public informed, and to open lines of communication for the sharing of questions, problems, and suggestions regarding the Comprehensive Plan and land use regulations.

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

A strong public involvement program was determined to be essential to the success of Clatsop County planning. In 1972, an attitude survey was conducted of various interest groups and selected individuals within the County. In 1974, with the assistance of Oregon State University Extension Service, a citizen advisory committee was developed for the Clatsop Plains Planning Area. Subsequently, other citizen advisory committees were created for the remaining seven planning areas identified at that time.

In 1976, the Board approved Resolution and Order #76-2-19, which established the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) as the Committee for Citizen Involvement. The PAC consisted of an elected delegate from each of the eight citizen advisory committees. The work of the PAC was supplemented by eight planning area citizen advisory committees whose role was to advise and provide input to the Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners on land use issues.

Between 1976 and approximately 1989, the eight planning areas were reduced to six, as the Hammond area was incorporated into the City of Warrenton and the “Lower River and Islands” planning area was added

**Figure 1: Clatsop County Planning Areas 2022**



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to the Northeast planning area. Following adoption and acknowledgement of the original Comprehensive Plan in 1980, the majority of the citizen advisory committees were disbanded, with the exception of the Southwest Coastal committee. This committee continued to operate, albeit with a changing understanding of its role, until 2017, when it was also dissolved by the Board of Commissioners (Ordinance 17-02). The Clatsop County Planning Commission functions as the Committee for Citizen Involvement and has done so since 1990, following the adoption of Ordinance 90-01. As the Committee for Citizen Involvement (CCI), the Planning Commission has the responsibility of hearing from all segments of the public on land use-related issues. To that end, community members are offered an opportunity at each Planning Commission meeting to speak about any item that is not already included on that meeting's agenda. However, the Planning Commission has not typically conducted meetings specifically focused on its roles and responsibilities as the CCI.

Clatsop County continues to employ many conventional modes of outreach as part of its public involvement plan. These methods include:

- Legal notices published in the local paper
- Public notices mailed to property owners within a prescribed distance from a subject property
- Submission of meeting announcements to local radio station event calendars
- Notices, agendas and minutes posted on the official County website
- Use of social media to promote upcoming events and meetings

In 2019, the Board of Commissioners reestablished the six planning area citizen advisory committees in support of the first holistic update to the County's comprehensive plan since adoption in 1980. While each of those committees has expressed a desire to remain active following the completion of the comprehensive plan update process, the Board has also expressed an interest in obtaining public input directly from community members via additional public meetings or community surveys.

## FUTURE CONDITIONS

### Planning for Future Public Participation

Larger trends relating to public participation, coupled with Clatsop County's strong community culture and willingness of its community members to engage in planning activities, create a variety of assets which can be drawn from when thinking about how to approach public participation in the future.

### The Changing Idea of Engagement

Traditional community engagement in Clatsop County has included events such as work sessions, town hall-style meetings or public hearings. These were traditionally events where a

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community member has transportation to travel to Astoria and has time to commit to the community involvement process. As technology changes and community members have more demands placed on their time, it is important that the County explore and utilize alternative methods of interacting with stakeholders. Examples might include the use of online questionnaires or social media. The County could also use translation services to make it easier for non-English speakers to participate. Community groups and organizations might be utilized to spread the word about upcoming events and information about land use applications, while also reaching populations that might not ordinarily be engaged in County events.

During the coronavirus pandemic which began in 2020, the use of online, or virtual, meetings became a commonplace way to continue to conduct public meetings and obtain public input. The use of electronic platforms, however, has also placed a spotlight on the broadband infrastructure deficiencies within certain parts of the county. Adopted in 2021, ORS 192.670(3) now requires local governments, to the extent reasonably possible, to provide the public an opportunity to remotely access and attend public meetings. If the county allows for oral or written testimony at a meeting, the county must also provide the public an opportunity to submit testimony remotely.

In 2022, Oregon's Kitchen Table staff from Portland State University worked with Clatsop County to conduct public outreach regarding the comprehensive plan update. This outreach included three public meetings, both virtual and in-person, as well as paper and electronic surveys. One of the questions asked related to how the County could involve more people in the land use process. The results of these outreach events are detailed in the OKT report and summarized below.

- Hold county commission meetings at times that are convenient for more people to attend
- Host conversations at community events that people already attend
- Conduct outreach events at churches, schools grocery stores, community centers or places where people volunteer
- Utilize more online and mailed questionnaires
- Provide translation services to allow people who speak a language other than English to participate
- Increase the use of social media
- Coordinate with local school districts to develop an understanding of county government and provide internship opportunities
- Hold meetings in different parts of the county



*Don Abing, Chinook Indian Nation Liaison, speaks to the Clatsop Plains Citizen Advisory Committee*

### Encouraging Diversity

According to the 2020 Decennial Census conducted by the US Census Bureau, the County's population of 41,072 self identifies as follows:

- **White (not Hispanic or Latino):** 33,526 (81.63%)
- **Hispanic or Latino:** 3,848 (9.30%)
- **Asian:** 552 (1.34%)
- **American Indian or Alaskan Native:** 344 (0.80%)
- **Black or African American:** 224 (0.55%)
- **Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander:** 91 (0.22%)
- **Two or More Races:** 2,256 (5.50%)<sup>1</sup>

Planning for the future should also include ways to increase and engage more diverse

communities.

Diversity can also be viewed in terms of appointed representation on various county advisory committees, including the Planning Commission, which serves as the County's Committee for Citizen Involvement. While the County has six planning areas (Figure 1), not all planning areas are represented. Specifically, the Planning Commission has no representatives from either the Seaside Rural or Elsie-Jewell planning areas.

### Digital Technology

As discussed above, the current Comprehensive Plan was initially adopted in 1980. Although revisions have been made to various goals and community plans over the ensuing decades, this will be the first comprehensive review of the plan in almost 40 years. Technology, particularly digital technology, has dramatically changed since the plan was adopted. Widespread use of

<sup>1</sup> **Two or more races.** People may choose to provide two or more races either by checking two or more race response check boxes, by providing multiple responses, or by some combination of check boxes and other responses. For data product purposes, "Two or More Races" refers to combinations of two or more of the following race categories: "White," "Black or African American," "American Indian or Alaska Native," "Asian," "Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander," or "Some Other Race". **Sources:** U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program (PEP). Updated annually. [Population and Housing Unit Estimates](#)  
U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS). Updated annually. [American Community Survey](#)

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the internet, social media and smartphones has changed how people communicate and conduct business. Technology can be used to enhance community engagement; however, it is vital to remember that there is still a divide between members of the public that have access to digital technology and those that don't. While the County maintains a website and provides access to documents and information online, it is important that the County also ensure that information is also compatible with smartphone technology. During this update of the Comprehensive Plan, residents, stakeholders, staff and appointed and elected officials will have had the opportunity to reflect on these technological changes, to consider how technology may change in the future, and to incorporate recommendations and strategies into the updated plan that will ensure access is available to all who choose to participate, regardless of the manner of the participation.