

Appendix C
Public Participation Plan

Benton County Public Participation Plan 2017 Comprehensive Plan Update

Introduction

One of the mainstays of the Growth Management Act (GMA) is citizen participation. This concept is first articulated in the GMA planning goals, as noted in RCW 36.70A.020. The guidelines that follow in this Public Participation Plan (PPP) are intended to guide and form the basis for public participation related to the GMA and Benton County’s planning processes in updating the Comprehensive Plan for 2017. Benton County intends to comply with these guidelines as appropriate to each situation. However, it should be noted that deviations from these guidelines are inevitable and may be warranted, given unique and specific circumstances. RCW 36.70A.140 allows for alterations to the PPP without voiding the overall scope of the project.

Scope of review

Planning Goals and Policies
Land Use Element
Housing Element
Capital Facilities Element

Utilities Element
Transportation Element
Critical Areas Element
Other Elements

Public Participation Guidelines

1. Information services and communication programs.

Benton County will develop, implement, and maintain communication and information services with the intent and purpose of involving and including the most comprehensive and diverse cross-section of the citizens of the community. Benton County will inform and include the public through the following portals:

- Develop and maintain an internet website dedicated to the County’s update process.
- Establish, advertise and become actively engaged in responding to written inquiries through email, fax and standard mail.
- Compile a list of parties interested in the PPP obtained from sign-in sheets, written correspondence, and known community groups.

2. Broad distribution of proposals and possible alternatives.

Benton County will distribute documents and information so that they are readily available in a timely fashion for interested parties who would like to view them. Supporting documents such as reports, analyses, recommendations, or environmental reviews should also be easily

accessible. Benton County will take the following steps to ensure that important documents are available in a timely manner by using these guidelines:

- Proposals should be available 10 days prior to a public meeting or hearing scheduled for discussion and/or a decision.
- Electronic versions of documents will be available through the County’s website.
- Hard copies are available at the Benton County Planning Department.

3. Public meetings after effective notice.

Benton County will publicize all public meetings and hearings to ensure that the largest number of individuals is made aware of the opportunities to become involved in the Comprehensive Plan update. The following key points will allow this to take place:

- Meet RCW 36.70 and 36.70A requirements.
- Legal notices are published at intervals as required by state law.
- Notices published on the County website.
- Fliers available at the Benton County Planning Department.
- Mailings and emails sent to a compiled list of interested parties.

Meeting Participants

- *Residents*
- *Property Owners*
- *Businesses*
- *Non-profit Groups*
- *Governmental Agencies*

4. Provisions for ensuring open discussions.

Benton County will ensure that public meetings will provide opportunities for an open discussion relating to the relevant issues and these meetings and hearings will allow for appropriate public testimony. Benton County will have the following standards in place to promote the availability of open discussions:

- Schedule meetings and hearings at a date, time and place that should be convenient.
- Provide brief overviews outlining the documents and purpose of each meeting.
- Attendees are encouraged to identifying themselves with sign-in sheets.
- Summaries of each meeting shall be posted as soon as possible.
- Special arrangements to be made available for ADA compliance.

5. Opportunity for submitting written comments.

Benton County will encourage and promote the submission of written comments and/or testimony throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process. In many instances, detailed, technical, or personal comments can be best expressed and understood in a written format. The following steps should be taken by Benton County staff to encourage written comments:

Tips for submitting written comments

- *Submit prior to deadlines*
- *Helps clarify verbal comments*
- *At public meetings, email or standard mail*
- *Include contact information*

- Provide the contact information of the individuals where written materials should be sent.
- Have clear and concise deadline requirements for submitting written comments.
- Persons testifying should be encouraged to provide concise written statements.
- Promote the use of surveys, alternative interactive displays, or the use of electronic communication technologies.

6. Considerations of and responses to public comments.

Benton County will consider all relevant public comments and public testimony in the decision making process of the Comprehensive Plan update. There are various methods for involving and informing the public, publicizing proposals, and soliciting public comments or opinions. Additional steps will be taken so that comments and recommendations from the public are reviewed by the decision-makers for relevancy. Those would include the following:

- Time should be reserved subsequent to the close of a hearing or comment deadline period prior to the decision so that relevant materials can be adequately reviewed.
- Reconvene a hearing for the purpose of addressing comments that may be used by decision-makers if found necessary.
- Substantive comments pertaining to studies, analyses or reports should be included in the published document itself, such as an EIS statement.
- The record of all comments and testimony shall be compiled and maintained by the staff of the Benton County Planning Department.
- Relevant comments or testimony should be addressed through the findings-of-fact portion of the written decision or recommendation.

Work Plan/Scheduling

Deadline

Phase I Public Participation Plan

March 2015

- Develop and adopt the PPP for the 2017 Comprehensive Plan update.
- Conduct a preliminary GMA Compliance review.

Phase II Visioning and Public Outreach

June 2015

- Develop a website for the 2017 update.
- Compile an interested party's database.

Phase III Finalize Scope of Work

August 2015

- Complete a finalized scope of work.
- Provide an all-encompassing outline of what is to come.

Phase IV Draft Comprehensive Plan Elements

April 2016

- Complete each of the elements of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Produce a complete first draft of the Comprehensive Plan update.

Phase V Revisions and Update

June 2016

- Circulate the first draft of the document.
- Hold public meetings to allow for public comment.
- Provide concise feedback to those who commented.

Phase VI Planning Commission and County Commissioner's review and approval.

December 2016

- Schedule a public hearing with the Planning Commission.
- Submittal and discussion before the Planning Commission.
- Forward recommendation and documents to County Commissioner's for their consideration.
- A public hearing before the County Commissioners.

Phase VII Submit the Comprehensive Plan to the State.

February 2017

- Provide copies to the necessary State agencies for required comments.
- Review their comments and address any necessary concerns.
- Begin 60-day appeal period after publication of Notice of Adoption.