



Public Involvement Plan

Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan Compliance 2012

February 2012



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Introduction

Kittitas County's 2006 Comprehensive Plan and related Development Regulations were rejected in part by the Eastern Washington Growth Management Hearings Board (EWGMHB), which hears disputes arising from the adoption of comprehensive plans and development regulations. Over the last few years, the County has amended the Comprehensive Plan to comply with the decision by the EWGMHB. Some issues remain to be addressed, and as a result of the Order Following Remand from Washington State Supreme Court in matters 07-1-0004c and 07-1-0015 dated November 7th of 2011, the County has initiated work on the Comprehensive Plan Compliance 2012 project. The remaining legal issues to be addressed include:

Case No. 07-1-0004c

- Issue 1: Three-acre densities
- Issue 6: Expansion of City of Kittitas Urban Growth Area (UGA)
- Issue 10: Variety of rural densities
- Issue 11: KCC 16.09 (Performance Based Cluster Platting) and KCC 17.36 (PUD Zone)
- Issue 14: Expansion of City of Kittitas Urban Growth Area (UGA)

Case No. 07-1-0015

- Issue 1: Rural densities
- Issue 2: Urban uses in rural areas
- Issue 3: Urban uses in agricultural lands of long-term significance
- Issue 4: Water quality and quantity of land with common ownership
- Issue 6: Highway Commercial Zone
- Issue 7: One-time splits

Public Involvement Goal

The overall goal of the Public Involvement Plan is to reach out and involve the public and other interested parties in the development of Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulation changes that address the issues outlined above and meet the requirements for public participation required by the GMA and SEPA (RCW 36.70A.020; RCW 36.70A.035, RCW 36.70A.140, WAC 365-195-600).

While the Public Involvement Plan focuses on the legal issues outlined above, the County will also be coordinating with public outreach for the following Community Development Services projects:

- Annual Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations docketing (Kittitas County Code Title 15B).
- Regional Shoreline Master Program update with the City of Ellensburg, City of Cle Elum and Town of South Cle Elum.
- Kittitas County Critical Areas Ordinance update.

Public Involvement Plan Objectives

The Public Involvement Plan is designed to meet the following objectives:

- Inform the public and interested/affected stakeholders about Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulation revisions to meet the Growth Management Act;
- Involve the public and interested/affected stakeholders in considering options for the twelve rural subareas identified by County staff for analysis;
- Provide easy, convenient and different ways for the public to participate – even those who join late in the process;
- Prevent last minute surprises or reactions that have the potential to derail the process;
- Meet legal requirements of public participation;
- Support the County in conducting positive community relations; and
- Ensure a process that provides the best opportunity for successful adoption of Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulation changes that are compliant with GMA.

Key Messages

Key messages are used to communicate the project to the public and other stakeholders in ways that supports the County goals and objectives, makes project information easily accessible and digestible, and ensures consistency and clarity. Project context and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) will be posted on the project Web site, and will include key messages.

Project context and key messages will be used consistently in all project materials including postcards, posters, Web site, as well as in news releases, calendar announcements, Public Service.

Announcements and other media materials. As technical analyses are prepared and additional questions are raised, additional FAQs may be developed.

Target Audiences

Understanding diverse audiences is important in designing and implementing effective strategies for public participation. Kittitas County is home to many different individuals, families and businesses, all of whom have a stake in the future of the community. The Public Involvement Plan is planned to address GMA compliance. This includes any and all parties that currently have or may have an interest in compliance issues of the County's Comprehensive Plan. Similarly, the range of "involvement" is wide and includes varying degrees of interest and participation. Interested parties may be asked their opinions about specific compliance issues such as preferred land use designations in rural areas; in other cases public communication will be focused on "informing" parties about progress the County makes towards GMA compliance. This Public Involvement Plan addresses the full spectrum of interested parties that may participate and recommends a variety of tools to reach and communicate with them.

See Appendix A for profiles of the target audiences and key outreach tactics. This list is a key component of this Public Involvement Plan. This list will be converted to a mailing list that will be updated by Kittitas County Community Development Services throughout the process.

Outreach Activities

There are two main categories of public involvement outreach activities –Initiation Activities and Ongoing Outreach Activities. Each is described below.

Public Involvement Initiation Activities

Before public involvement for the project officially kicks off, several initiation tasks will be conducted. These activities build a solid foundation for the project and ensure consistency, clarity and agreement among project team members about how activities will proceed. These include development of a Public Involvement Plan (this document), development of a contact database, contact with key community leaders and project materials protocols.

Contact Database

The contact database is used to disseminate project information. The database will be created in Excel spreadsheet format; be easy to use to create mailing labels; and include email, mailing address, and phone numbers. For community organizations, if possible, it will include the type of organization, when they meet, how they distribute information, if they are a candidate for a project poster and interest in assisting with dissemination of project materials. The contact database will include entries for property owners in the County, including contact information for both local and absentee property owners. It is expected that the County will provide mailing labels for all R-3, AG-3, R-5 and Ag-5 zoned property owners in the county. The contact database will be used to distribute project materials including project flyers/fact sheets and project posters.

Stakeholder Interviews

Using a list of pre-developed questions, the consultant will conduct a stakeholder early outreach effort to contact key community members to elicit information from identified stakeholders about: 1) knowledge, perceptions and concerns about the County's compliance issues; 2) expected areas of controversy; 3) suggestions/strategies for success; and 4) any other issues pertinent to executing a successful public involvement process and assisting the County in achieving GMA compliance. Stakeholder contacts may include representatives from the environmental, business and development communities, as well as community members who reside in or near potential county growth areas.

Project Materials and Project Web Site

The County will develop a project identity to be used on all materials including the Web site. The identity will be designed with a consistent look including font, layout and use of County logos.

Ongoing Outreach Activities

These activities represent the core of the public involvement effort to be executed for this project.

Project Materials for Public Workshops

Project postcards – To advertise the public workshops, the County will utilize project postcards. For the first set of meetings, the postcard will be distributed using the contact database and county property mailing lists. Distribution for future mailings will be determined during as the project proceeds.

Project comment card – One generic project comment card will be developed, consistent with the look and design of the meeting flyers/fact sheets, to be used at all public meetings and made available through the County Website.

Project posters – Project posters may be used to communicate with county residents about upcoming public meetings. Where utilized, posters will be distributed to county locations identified through the development of the contact database.

Project Display Boards – Informational display boards for each set of public meetings will be prepared. Boards will contain maps (using County-provided GIS layers) and informational material to support meeting topics.

Project Web Site

The County will create a public Web site, following the format of the 2009 Compliance Project, and will enable users to comment directly to a contact email address.

Public Workshops

Two sets of public workshops will be held to share information and obtain input from residents and stakeholders. The workshops will be focused on the rural area of the County. The workshops located near the City of Kittitas will also focus on the City Urban Growth Area expansion. Each of the workshops in each phase will have a similar format and be designed to coordinate productive communication between the county and community members. The first set will be designed to communicate about the status of county GMA compliance, draft assessments of the rural area, and technical assessment, and to hear community reactions/interests. The second set of meetings will be designed to communicate potential options for amendments to land use designations, zoning, and development regulations. A third set will be held once the technical reports are completed and a final staff recommendation for amendments is available. The purpose of these meetings will be to share results of the integration of the analysis, and recommendations about how to achieve compliance and meet the needs/interests of the community.

Each set of workshops will be held in the same week. Public meeting summaries will be completed and posted on the Web site. Specific results of each meeting location will be included in the combined public meeting summary.

Media Relations

The County will develop news releases, submit bulletin board and calendar announcements, and coordinate community TV coverage, if possible, of Comprehensive Plan compliance activities. Additional information to come after discussion with the project team.

Agency Coordination

The purpose of this task will be to facilitate coordination of compliance issues with affected agencies and organizations, including updates with Kittitas County Commissioners, the County Planning Commission, cities and, as necessary, the COG.

Meetings of BOCC/Planning Commission

The BOCC and Planning Commission will meet either separately or jointly during the process. The scheduling of meetings will vary depending on the overall required compliance schedule:

- 1) After project initiation to communicate the process and schedule;
- 2) After the initial set of public meetings to communicate results and next steps; and

3) After the final set of public meetings and for review of the final draft compliance package. They would review project deliverables, provide feedback, and assist in communicating about the process to friends, neighbors and colleagues.

Meetings with City of Kittitas

The project team will coordinate with the city of Kittitas to discuss the results and implications of the land capacity analysis and public facilities planning.

Meetings with Kittitas County Conference of Governments (KCCOG)

If necessary, the project team will coordinate with the KCCOG with regard to the Countywide Planning Policies. This is expected to occur at either one or both of the following meetings: April 25th and June 27th. If action by the KCCOG is necessary, a subsequent meeting will be scheduled after the Planning Commission has held public hearings and before the Board of County Commissioners is anticipated to take action on compliance issues.

Public Involvement Schedule

The Order from the Eastern Washington Growth Management Hearings Board includes a compliance due date of September 12, 2012. The County project Web site will include a more detailed schedule for the various phases of the project and will be updated as necessary.

Appendix A

Public Involvement – Target Audiences

Target Audiences

Understanding diverse audiences is important in designing and implementing effective strategies for public participation. Kittitas County is home to many different individuals, families and businesses, all of whom have a stake in the future of the community. The Public Involvement Plan is designed to inform and involve the broad “public” of Kittitas County in decisions and actions planned to address GMA compliance. This includes any and all parties that currently have or may have an interest in compliance issues of the County’s Comprehensive Plan. Similarly, the range of “involvement” is wide and includes varying degrees of interest and participation. Interested parties may be asked their opinions about specific compliance issues such as preferred land use designations in rural areas; in other cases public communication will be focused on “informing” parties about progress the County makes towards GMA compliance. This Public Involvement Plan addresses the full spectrum of interested parties that may participate and recommends a variety of tools to reach and communicate with them. These activities are guided by the following considerations:

- Different people will choose to participate in different ways at different times—some will attend all meetings, be very vocal with comments and seek out more information for understanding. Others will have limited interest and will not participate. Some may only participate when final decisions are being considered by elected officials. Still others may be compelled to participate only when pushed by their friends or neighbors. Being prepared to address the needs and interests of all participants at any time in the process is a key consideration in development of the Public Involvement Plan.
- There will always be latecomers to the process. Providing project background and history, keeping information up to date, and assisting parties in understanding what took place before their involvement is also a key consideration.
- People often need more than one reminder to take action. Project flyers, newspaper articles, and project posters are tools to help spread the word and ensure that community members are notified about project events.
- People access information in different ways. Some prefer using the Web on their own time; others prefer face-to-face. Providing multiple methods to comment, different ways to obtain information and creating diverse meeting formats provides opportunities for all.
- People come to the table with different levels of understanding. Well-written materials, in plain language, and in response to commonly asked questions, ensure that all parties can develop project understanding and provide meaningful input.
- The Kittitas County Board of County Commissioners is responsible for adopting Comprehensive Plan changes. The Board’s decisions should reflect a consideration of public views and interests. The Board, and agencies responsible for confirming compliance, must have confidence that an inclusive public process was conducted.

The following section describes each of the target audiences and the outreach tactics planned for communicating with them.

General Public

The general public is defined as members of the community including residents, businesses and any others that might be interested in GMA compliance issues.

Profile: Typical characteristics of this group include limited understanding of the Comprehensive Plan process, limited contact and/or knowledge of County departments and functions, including the Kittitas County Department of Community Development, and mixed levels of interest to engage in government-sponsored activities and projects. This group includes developers and members of the construction industry. Many of these businesses have a clear understanding about development regulations, have been involved or at least observed public planning processes, and are interested in the plan outcomes. Members of the public may feel supported or imposed upon by local government. An outreach challenge is identifying and implementing a cost-effective method for reaching all county residents.

Key Outreach Tactics: The thrust of outreach activities associated with the general public in Kittitas County will be focused on communicating comprehensive plan messages clearly and consistently at key milestones. The following tactics will be used to reach these groups:

- Direct mail and email distribution of project postcards
- Posting of project posters at high visibility community locations
- Project Web site
- Media relations
- Public workshops

Community Organizations

Community organizations are loosely defined as groups, associations, committees or other gatherings of individuals that come together for a common interest and/or cause. This includes service groups such as Rotary, League of Women Voters, Kiwanis, etc.; neighborhood associations; business groups; environmental groups; downtown associations; seniors groups; realtors associations; and other community organizations.

Profile: These groups are varied in their understanding and experience in working with local government organizations. Some have directories to local government through funding, staffing or advisory relationships. Others may have coalesced specifically in response to a local government program or action. These groups may work collaboratively with local government or be at cross purposes. For example, some community groups form specifically to protest government actions. Community organizations offer opportunities to extend the reach of the project team and project materials. Some in this category are very knowledgeable about the planning and development process and can bring that knowledge to bear in positive ways. Others may be inclined to distrust or disagree with county recommendations and programs.

Key Outreach Tactics: The key outreach tactics used to reach these groups will be the same as those listed above. In addition, opportunities will be sought to “leverage” these groups’ communication with their constituents. For example, interested organizations may include a project flyer or article in their organization’s newsletter or may provide their distribution list to the project team for dissemination of materials. The following tactics will be used to reach these groups:

- Direct mail and email distribution of project postcards
- Project Web site

- Posting of project posters in the community
- Media relations
- Public workshops

Affected Property Owners

Affected property owners are members of the community that own property in a previously-designed urban growth node. They will likely have an interest in growth and development regulations, especially as they relate to their private property rights and their ability to develop and/or preserve their land in the future.

Profile: These groups and individuals vary in their understanding of county development regulations and requirements. They may have participated in past planning processes and may have a predisposition –either positive or negative –about the County and regulation of land use.

Key Outreach Tactics: Outreach activities for this audience should be focused on keeping property owners well informed and up to date about project progress, meetings and key decision~ making points. All of the tactics listed previously will be used. In addition, the project team should be sensitive to additional information needs of this group. Because they could be the most directly affected by changes in land use designations, they may benefit from more interaction with the project team. Prompt responses to phone calls, making time to talk face-to-face at public meetings, and being available to meet one-on-one are recommended.

- Direct mail and email distribution of project postcards
- Project Web site
- Posting of project posters in the community
- Media relations
- Public workshops
- Responsive and accessible interaction as necessary (may include phone calls, one-on-one meetings or other)

Kittitas County Board of Commissioners, Planning Commission and Conference of Governments

This group includes joint meetings with the Kittitas County Board of Commissioners and Planning Commission, and Kittitas County Conference of Governments.

Profile: Members of this group are very knowledgeable about local government and comprehensive planning, and are well connected to existing networks of communication among county/city government and with community members. Most are well known throughout the community, have established relationships and can serve as ambassadors for the project, if so inclined.

Key Outreach Tactics: Kittitas County Board of County Commissioners will be kept informed through regular updates from county staff. They will be apprised of all upcoming events, plan progress and key milestones. They will be provided with copies of all communication materials, be presented with suggestions and guidance for conducting outreach of their own, and make direct contact with local community organizations as they have time and interest. The following tactics will be used to reach these groups:

- Joint meetings
- Briefings and updates
- Direct mail and email distribution of project materials

Government and Quasi-Government Groups

This group includes the incorporated cities of Ellensburg, Cle Elum, Roslyn, Kittitas, and South Cle Elum; tribes, local school districts, utility providers, and others. Membership varies; some are appointed community members, some are represented by local government staff, and others are elected officials.

Profile: Most of these groups are knowledgeable about local government and public planning processes, and are connected to existing networks of communication. They will be relatively easy to reach through established relationships and regular meeting schedules. It will be important to coordinate with these groups as early as possible to confirm meeting dates and ensure adequate time for Comprehensive Plan discussions. Many of the individuals in these groups are expected to be willing and interested in participating. A challenge for some individuals in these groups may be a lack of time to spend engaged in this process, based on their other community commitments.

Key Outreach Tactics: These groups will be generally reached through the outreach activities described for other audiences. In addition, smaller, one-on-one meetings may be warranted with individual cities, especially the City of Kittitas, to discuss jurisdiction-specific implications. Tactics include:

- Direct mail and email distribution of project materials
- Direct phone and email contact by county staff and consultants, if appropriate
- One-on-one meetings with jurisdictions, as necessary

Media

Key media for Kittitas County include print and electronic media including the *Daily Record*, Ellensburg; *Cascade Times* (Snoqualmie Pass), *Yakima Herald-Republic*, *CWU Observer*, *KIMA News*, *KAPP News*, *KNDU News*, *KNDO News*, *KCWU 88.1* –Central Washington University, Ellensburg; *KXLE* –Ellensburg; and *Northern Kittitas County Tribune* –Cle Elum.

Profile: The media is interested in topics of local interest, including the activities of local government. Media representatives are often drawn to controversial topics and can stimulate public interest through creative coverage of activities and events. A key benefit of the media is the ability to quickly reach a large number of people through news articles, paid advertisements and op-ed pieces.

Key Outreach Tactics: News releases and calendar announcements will be used as a method for communicating important project information. County Planning Official, Robert “Doc” Hansen, will be the primary County spokesperson for this project, will coordinate communication among County representatives, be responsive and available to answer questions, participate in media interviews when requested, and be open and forthcoming with project information as it becomes available. The following tactics will be used to reach these groups:

- News releases/calendar announcements/Public Service Announcements
- Reporter outreach and media follow-up