

# Public Participation Plan

For the City of Shelton Comprehensive Plan Update

**CITY OF SHELTON DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

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*LEFT: Pears ripening on  
Trees planted by city  
founder David Shelton.*



## **What is Public Participation?**

Public participation is the process by which interested and affected individuals, organizations, agencies and government entities are consulted and included in the decision-making process. Public participation consists of three related, and often overlapping, processes: information dissemination, consultation, and stakeholder participation. Stakeholders are the individuals, groups, or institutions that have an interest or stake in the outcome of a project or action being considered. The term also applies to those potentially affected by a proposed project or action. Information dissemination refers to the availability and distribution of timely and relevant information on proposed programs, projects, or actions; in this case information regarding the City Comprehensive Plan update. Aspects of dissemination include appropriate notification and disclosure of update information and proper public access to it. Consultation pertains to information exchanges between the City and other affected government entities, agencies and organizations, including Mason County, the Port of Shelton, Mason Transit Authority, and others stakeholders. Consultation also provides opportunities for communities and local groups to contribute to planning scope, policy development, implementation, and evaluation.

## **Plan Objectives:**

This Public Participation Plan (PPP) is intended to promote early and continuous public participation as the City of Shelton prepares an update to the City's Comprehensive Plan. Development and implementation of a PPP is intended to encourage meaningful community participation by the constituents that the Comprehensive Plan serves. The PPP will promote public involvement that will influence decisions, and give the community a sense of ownership. By engaging the public in the Comprehensive Plan update process, the City addresses requirements of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) Chapter 36.70A, widely known as the Growth Management Act, or GMA.

## **The Washington State Growth Management Act:**

The Washington State Growth Management Act is a state law that requires state and local governments to manage Washington's growth by identifying and protecting critical areas and natural resource lands, designating urban growth areas, preparing comprehensive plans and implementing them through capital investments and development regulations. This approach to growth management is unique among states. Known as the GMA, the Act (Chapter 36.70A RCW) was adopted by the Legislature in 1990.

The GMA was adopted because the Washington State Legislature found that uncoordinated and unplanned growth posed a threat to the environment, sustainable economic development and the quality of life in Washington. Rather than centralize planning and decision-making at the state level, the GMA focuses on local control. The GMA establishes state goals, set deadlines for compliance, offers direction on how to prepare local comprehensive plans and regulations and sets forth requirements for early and continuous public participation. Within the framework provided by the mandates of the Act, local governments have many choices regarding the specific content of comprehensive plans and implementing development regulations.

## Major Principles

*Citizen participation should result in:*

- Trust between government and citizens
- Informed judgements about City activities
- Face-to-face deliberation
- Decisions that reflect a thorough consideration of community issues and perspectives
- Transparent and trackable decisions with stated accountabilities
- Common understanding of issues and appreciation for complexity

*Public participation is a process which allows the City to engage with the public to jointly:*

- Increase understanding of issues
- Determine possible options
- Generate new ideas
- Discover and explore possible compromises
- Gauge the greater public's support for various solutions

*Successful citizen participation requires:*

- Genuine intent and attitude by the City and its citizens to engage in a public process to help make better decisions
- A clearly defined process that identifies participant roles
- A variety of ways to participate and influence decisions
- That it occur early enough in the process to influence the outcome
- Effective communication throughout the process, including identification of assumptions about the issue, disclosing rationale for one's opinions, and being willing to consider the merit in others' opinions
- Identifying and inviting people who are affected or interested in the issue to be part of the process
- That dialog and deliberation be a part of the process
- That all participants work hard, listen to all sides, and attempt to understand opposing viewpoints
- Considering the "public good" perspective on all issues, especially when personal interests differ

## Roles and Responsibilities

### **CITIZEN EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A fair, respectful, and open process which allows all who are affected or interested to have an equal opportunity to participate
- Clear, complete and straightforward information from the City and other presenters
- To be involved early enough in the process to influence the outcome
- To work hard at learning about the issue, listening to all perspectives, attempting to understand opposing viewpoints, trying to reach compromise on difficult issues, and to consider the “public good” perspective on all issues
- Follow-up to their involvement by receiving information about the final decisions and why it was made
- To be able to be part of the solution and to define a role in implementation as is appropriate

### **ELECTED OFFICIALS ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Recognize the benefits of citizen involvement and serve as an advocate for its use
- Provide resources and support City staff initiative in utilizing public participation processes
- Decide the citizen involvement process that will be used before the process is initiated
- Define the decision-making process and the roles that respective parties will play
- Identify elements of the issue that may not be conducive to open process
- Assist in issue scoping
- Provide clear delegations of responsibilities between elected officials and City staff, where appropriate
- Ensure that citizens are aware of the opportunities to participate throughout the prescribed process
- Assist citizens to work hard to understand the issues, respect opposing viewpoints, work for good solutions and help to define the “public good”
- Honor the spirit of the process as it is proceeding and respect the ambiguous nature of the process
- Be informed about the process and engage where appropriate to ensure the goals of the process
- Fulfill their role as decision-maker according to the selected type of citizen involvement process being used
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the public involvement process

### **CITY STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Recognize the benefits of citizen involvement and serve as advocate for its use
- Inform themselves regarding the efficacy and appropriateness of public involvement processes that may be useful
- Ensure that resources are adequate for staff’s role in conducting the process
- Provide citizen involvement training to staff
- Utilize performance incentives that build and foster capacity for success in public involvement
- Engage with the public as partners in the design and execution of the public involvement strategy

- Help design and carry out the public involvement process in a way that most effectively ensures success
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the public involvement process
- Ensure that informational needs of the project are fulfilled
- To try and identify and involve as many affected or interested citizens as possible by designing a process that goes out to the people and is easy to become involved in

Democracy relies on engagement by citizens as a means of forming better solutions to civic matters. Citizen participation processes must be inclusive of those who identify themselves as interested and/or affected by decisions that will be made on issues of relevance to them. Citizen participation practices should generally result in decisions that reflect the community's voices.

Citizen participation is not a substitute for decision-making by the City, but a very important influence on it. Shared decision-making is not a cure for conflict because it does not mean the final decision will make everyone happy. It lets everyone know the reasons for a decision in the hope that all or most participants will accept that decision, even if they do not agree with it. This Plan offers participation processes that will continue to build on the solid interaction between citizens and City management.

The processes for environmental review, decision-making and final adoption are established by state statutes and contained in the Shelton Municipal Code (SMC). This Plan is not intended to promote or establish deviations from adopted requirements, but supports those established processes by further engaging the community and assisting decision-makers during the process.



*ABOVE: Orca whales migrating in Oakland Bay. A rare site due to Oakland Bay being part of the most southerly limits of Puget Sound*

## Phases of the Public Involvement Process

### Step 1 – Project Description

To provide clear direction and measure Plan success, the project should be sufficiently described and a process timeline should be established. For 2015 and 2016, this would include the GMA-mandated 8-year update to the City’s Comprehensive Plan and development regulations, addressing issues identified through the completion of the Commerce periodic update checklist and items initialized by the public. The process is to commence early in 2015, and is mandated to be completed with the updates adopted in 2016. The process requires coordination with Mason County pertaining to the population projections, Urban Growth Area boundary and associated land uses, transportation, essential public facilities, and other elements contemplated in the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

### Step 2 – Issue Identification

This is the phase at which formal action begins through the adoption of a “docket” that identifies the plan elements which will be updated, and any other map or text amendments being considered. This will assist with identifying the associated potential environmental impacts and facilitate a coordinated and concurrent review under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). The Shelton Municipal Code (SMP) requires proposed amendments to be submitted for consideration no later than the last working day in March, and once included in the docket shall be assigned an application number.

### Step 3 – Assessment of the level of Public Interest and Participation

At this time there is insufficient information available to assess the level of public interest in the Comprehensive Plan update. However, based upon past similar planning efforts, staff has assumed there will be significant public interest or concern regarding this update. The proposed approach regarding public outreach is consistent with the level of interest anticipated, and would also meet the expectations of the public if it is later determined there is less public interest or concern. The proposed outreach would include informing the public regarding the Comprehensive Plan update, soliciting input, and involving the public throughout the process.

#### Step 4 – Identifying Public Participation Goals

The public participation goals should align with Growth Management Act (GMA) objectives and requirements, but can go beyond minimum thresholds within the GMA. Staff has identified the following goals:

- Provide early and continuous public participation
- Proposals and alternatives are to be broadly disseminated
- Process shall include public meetings after effective notice, provision for open discussion, communication programs, information services, and consideration of and response to public comments
- Public outreach shall target residents and business owners in the City of Shelton and the Shelton Urban Growth Area (UGA)
- The process shall include opportunities for consultation and input from an array of stakeholders, including local, state, regional and federal agencies and organizations
- The process shall be transparent
- The process shall be in adherence with the approved timeline.

#### Step 5 – Identify Stakeholders

Staff has identified the following stakeholders:

- Residents of Shelton and the Shelton UGA
- Owners of property in Shelton and the Shelton UGA
- Business owners within Shelton and the Shelton UGA
- Local public and private schools
- The building industry
- The real estate industry
- The health care industry
- The Shelton Historic Preservation Board
- The Mason County Historical Society
- The Shelton Human Services Committee
- Local, state, regional and federal agencies and organizations

In sum, this includes a broad range of citizens and organizations, and could include any individual or entity interested in the update process. The process is intended to be inclusive, and this list of stakeholders will be referenced to assist with public outreach and help assure all interested parties are provided opportunities to be part of the discussion.

### Step 6 – Selection of Tools

The City would employ the following methods for increasing community awareness and public participation:

- Two workshops, with one workshop held early in the process intended to inform the community regarding the periodic update objectives and ways to be involved, to disclose the project schedule and desired outcomes, and exchange contact information.
- Utilize a web-based application (such as Mindmixer) to generate electronic surveys that would allow the City to gather public sentiments regarding the periodic update and the public participation process.
- Create a factsheet that would inform the community of the pending update, provide information on the process including dates/times for key workshops & meetings. The factsheet would be broadly distributed utilizing several means:
  - Forwarded via email,
  - Posted on the City website,
  - Included as an insert with the monthly utility billing,
  - Printed on placemat material and provided to local restaurants.
- Utilize the local media to inform the community, such as:
  - Issuing press releases
  - Placing advertisements in the local newspapers to provide notice of key milestones, such as the workshops.
  - Provide project updates during the “Focus on Shelton” morning radio talk show
  - Request that the Mason County Journal write an in-depth article on the GMA and the City’s Comprehensive Plan update
- Attend meetings of the Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Board, and local non-profits as a guest speaker to provide an overview of the periodic update
- Commission review would be completed over several meetings, in which portions of the draft Comprehensive Plan elements and development regulations are presented and discussed.

### Step 7 – Creating a Schedule

The following provides a framework for accomplishing the periodic update within the timeframe allotted under the GMA.

<u>Goal or Action Item</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Date</u>
Public review of proposed comprehensive plan and development regulation changes, and other proposed code amendments	Public hearing	March 2015
Prepare and distribute factsheet, engage with the local media, present to clubs and organizations, post surveys	Inform	April -June
Host first community workshop	public meeting	May 2015
Prepare draft updated elements and development regulations for commission review, minimum of four meetings	public meetings	July 2015- May 2016
Second community workshop	public meeting	Oct. 2015
Commence 60-day review and conduct Public hearings on entire update	public hearing	June August 2016
Commission adopt City Comprehensive Plan and development regulations changes	Ordinance	Sept. 2016

Step 8 –

Implementation Phase

Unless appealed, the outcome of the decision-making phase is implemented.

Step 12 – Evaluation Phase

In order to promote and refine our collective learning from this process, it is essential that we evaluate the efficacy of both the public participation process utilized and the eventual outcome of the decision-making process. The experiences of those directly involved in the process need to be collected through a process or people who can be objective in the task. It is also important, depending on the scale of the process, to collect the opinions or experience of those who were not directly involved. The evaluations need to be documented, shared with decision-makers and maintained in a manner that makes them accessible for public review. Use of a web-based survey to collect information is anticipated.



Above: Replica of a mural painted by Velma Graves and Hazel Beckwith located in the Shelton Fire Hall