



Snohomish County

2024 Growth Management Act Comprehensive Plan Update

Communications Plan

Executive Summary

Snohomish County is required to update its Growth Management Act (GMA) Comprehensive Plan and regulations by June 30, 2024. To complete this body of work, County staff will be reviewing and updating information and reaching out to its residents, community groups, and businesses to inform, engage, and obtain input. The Communication Plan intends to establish a structure and approach to meet the state and local requirements for public outreach, and to ensure that effective engagement is accomplished to historically underserved communities and residents. The overarching goal of this outreach is to generate a Comprehensive Plan that ensures a high quality of life and access to opportunities for all residents.

Public outreach allows people to have a say in the future of their homes and communities. Planning decisions have historically upheld and instituted social and racial inequities. When planning departments perpetuate the existing system, they perpetuate inequity. As a result, a social-justice-oriented planning process needs to focus on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), and other historically underserved communities. As the county has an obligation to plan for all residents, Snohomish County has committed to equitably and meaningfully engaging with BIPOC as well as other historically underserved communities, such as veterans, seniors, youth, immigrants and refugees, people with low-income, and people living with disabilities. To equitably and inclusively engage a diverse population, the planning team must go beyond business as usual. In order to achieve this goal, the county will, for instance:

- Work hand in hand with other county departments to ensure our messaging is understandable, sensitive to the many cultures living and working in the county, and reaches groups historically excluded from long range planning processes.
- Continuously examine and add to our key party list.
- Clearly define and offer opportunities for public feedback.
- Consistently and continuously communicate to residents, businesses, municipalities, Tribes, utilities, agencies, and communities on the progress of the project.

- Educate the public about the Comprehensive Planning process and the County's projected growth rates over the next 20 years.
- Use graphics and imagery to better demonstrate planning concepts.
- Generate and circulate content to explain how the 2024 Update could impact the community.
- Utilize innovative tools and techniques.
- Cultivate relationships with community organizations to communicate with communities that have historically been underrepresented in decision-making processes. Take part in planned community events in order to meet members where they are, rather than putting the onus on the public to find and engage in county run events.
- Translate materials so that non-English speaking communities can more readily participate in public engagement.

Through public engagement, the County hopes to better understand the potential negative and positive impacts of the Comprehensive Plan so that the full story can be presented to elected officials. Ideally, the 2024 Update will incorporate both the concerns and ideas of the public, although this will not be possible without engagement. While County staff does not have the power to enact policies or development regulations, by incorporating the public's voice staff can provide the full context to elected officials as they make decisions.

The county plans to employ a range of communication methods to encourage and facilitate its strategy of maximizing public participation in the 2024 Update, and specifically engaging with historically underserved populations. The methods listed below represent the toolbox of options available to facilitate public participation during the planning process:

- Web presence;
- GIS story maps and other location-based public commenting;
- E-mail campaigns;
- Video campaigns;
- Social media;
- Direct mail and printed pieces;
- Online surveys;
- Open houses and public meetings; and
- In person and virtual gatherings.