

Heritage Farm Sustainability Plan

Open House # 2
David Stipe, Parks and Lands Planning and Development Manager
Rocky Houston, Parks and Lands Division Manager
January 24, 2023



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Welcome

The presentation will begin at 6:30PM

Online Participants:

Find Heritage Farm Sustainability Plan documents for review at:
<https://clark.wa.gov/public-works/heritage-farm-sustainability-plan> or



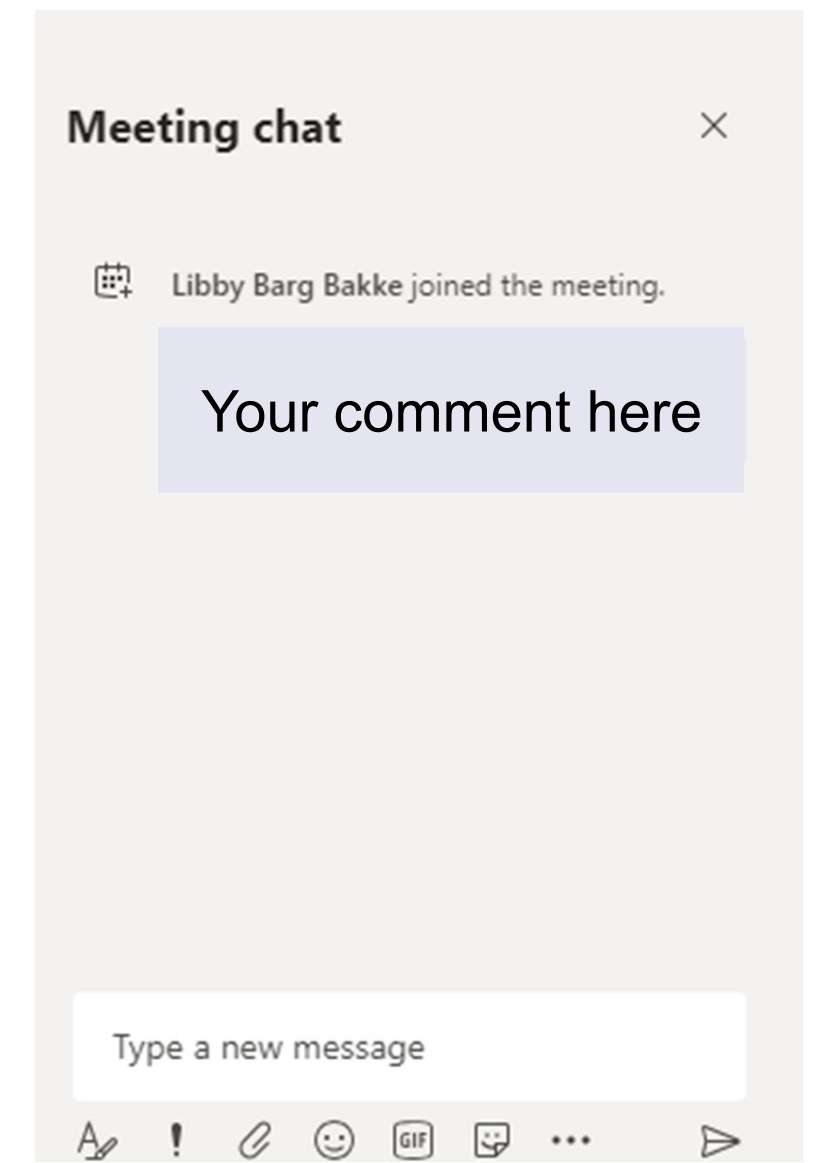

Heritage Farm Sustainability Plan Development 1/24/2024 2

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Welcome!

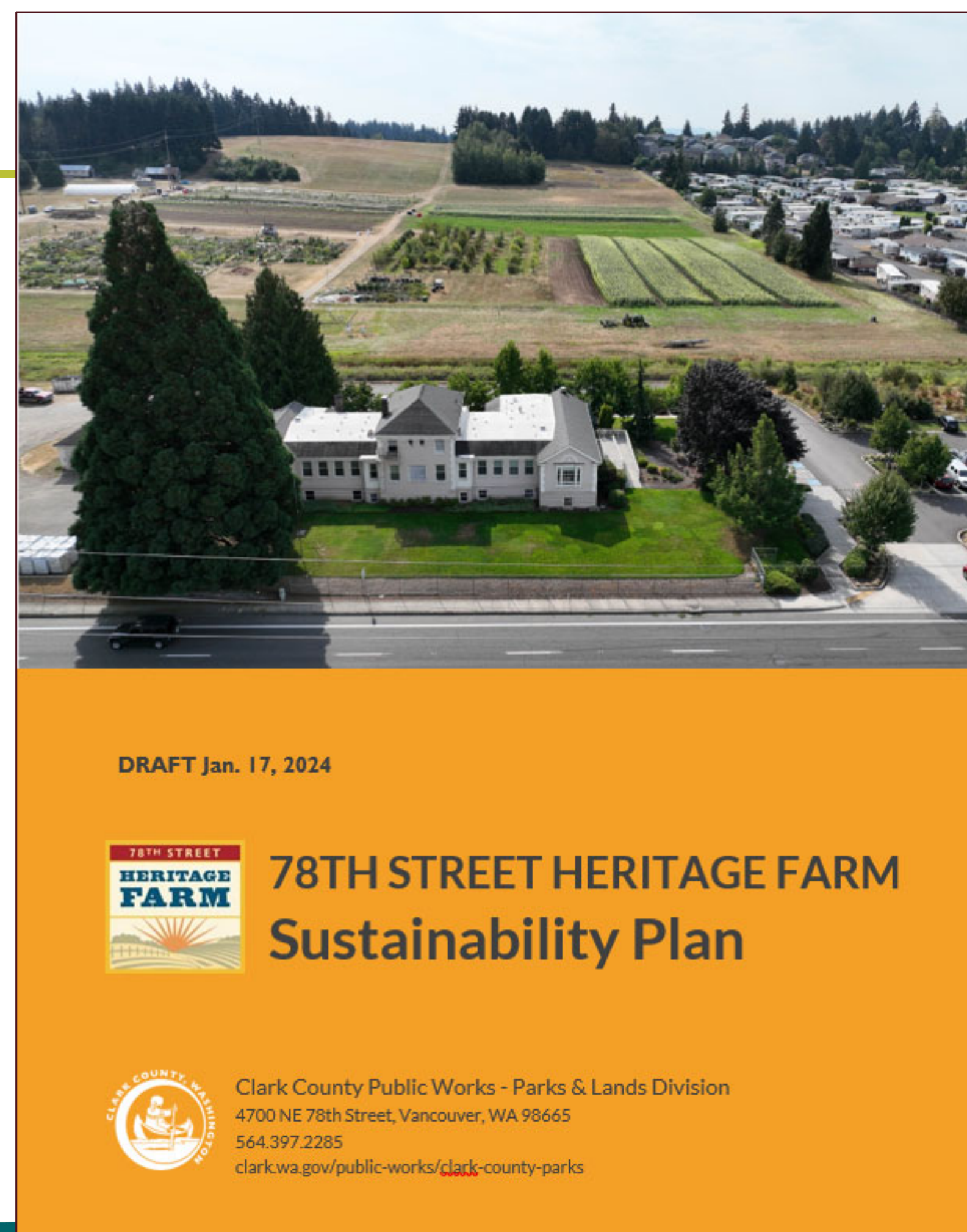
Joining us remotely? Here are some things to know—

- The meeting is being recorded.
- Virtual guests can use the chat tool to participate in the discussion.
- Questions and comments will be held until the Q & A portion of the event.



Agenda

- Introductions**
- What is Heritage Farm?**
- Plan development update**
- Public engagement results**
- Plan overview**
- How to provide feedback**
- Next steps**
- Questions and answers**



Introductions - staff

Name	Position	Organization
David Stipe	Parks and Lands Planning and Development Manager	Clark County Parks and Lands
Rocky Houston	Parks and Lands Division Manager	Clark County Parks and Lands
Hailey Shannon	Program Assistant	Clark County Public Works



Introductions – steering committee

Name	Representing
Matthew Baum	Clark County Public Works, Parks & Lands
Rob Freed & Sandy Brown	Heritage Farm Advisory Team
Teresa Meyer	Park Advisory Board
Rob Freed	Heritage Farm Advisory Team
Kristine Perry	WSU Extension Program
Michelle Vasquez-Stickley	Latinos Unidos y Floreciendo
Bill Cline	Northeast Hazel Dell Neighborhood Association
Ila Westergard	Hazel Dell/Salmon Creek Business Association
Tanika Siscoe	NAACP Vancouver
Zorah Oppenheimer	Clark Conservation District
Mark Wreath	Vancouver Public Schools



What is Heritage Farm?

- 79-acre Clark County owned property in northeast Hazel Dell, on NE 78th Street.
- The farm has a rich history as:
 - Land inhabited and visited by the Chinook, Cowlitz, Klickitat tribes and other indigenous peoples.
 - Land settled by William Reese and Sarah Jane Anderson in the 1800's.
 - Clark County Poor Farm from 1871 – 1943.
 - Southwest Washington Experimental Station from 1943 – 1966.
 - Managed by Washington State University for agricultural research and county extension services.
 - Currently operated by Clark County in partnership with Washington State University as a resource for agricultural focused education and community focused programming.



What is Heritage Farm?

Why are we here?

- In 2020, during the master plan update process, Clark County Council directed Parks and Lands to develop a plan that would address:
 - Increasing financial sustainability at the farm;
 - Increase public access to the farm;
 - Consistency with the adopted master plan;
 - Retention of the agricultural heritage of the site



What is Heritage Farm?

Plan vision

The sustainability plan is intended to provide an operational and funding framework for the 78th Street Heritage Farm that will allow it to continue to be a long-term agricultural and educational resources for the community, while improving informal access for all members of the community.

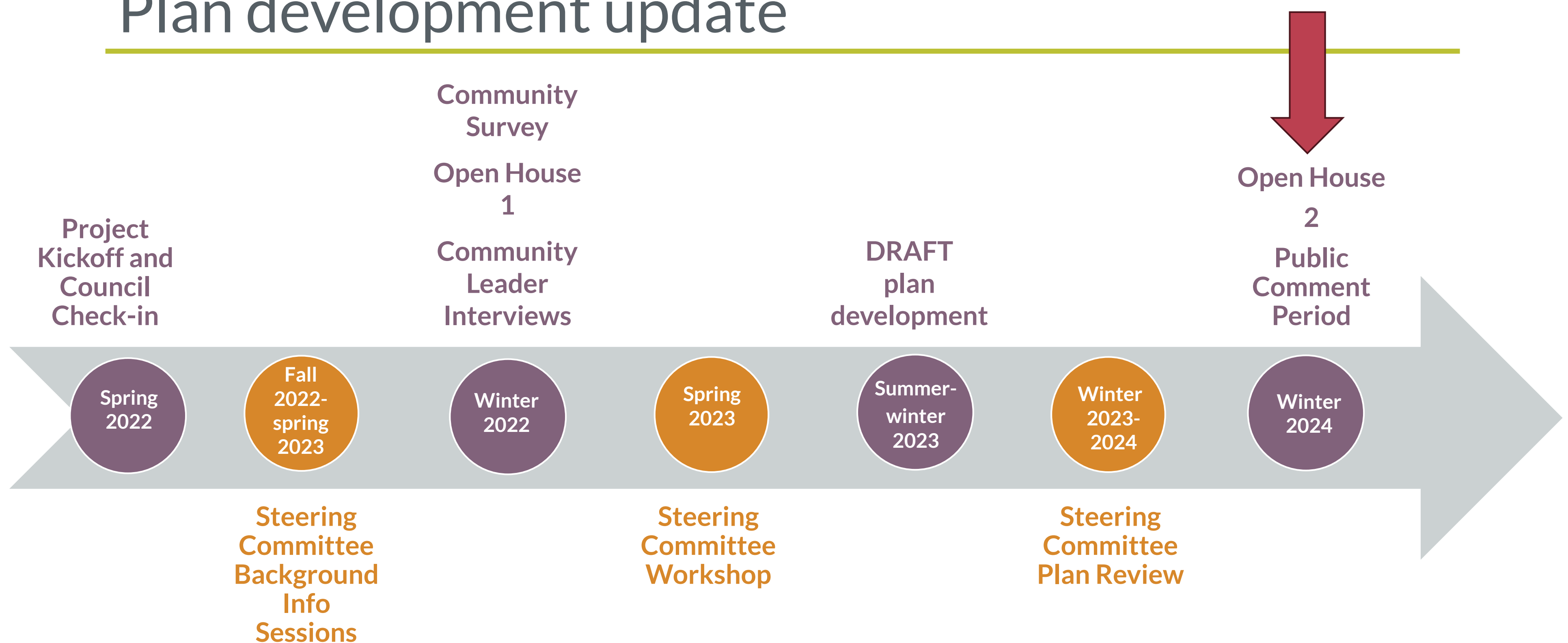


The plan will not:

- Recommend selling the property;
- Remove agricultural practices at the site;
- Eliminate Washington State University Extension services at the site.



Plan development update



Public engagement process

Public engagement process included:

- Stakeholder engagement and communication
- 12-member Steering Committee (6 meetings/workshop)
- Two open houses
- Community survey
- Community leader interviews
- Continuous public comment period



Public engagement results - survey

- Community survey was open Nov 2022 to Jan 2023
- Sent to Heritage Farm interested parties list, community groups not associated with the farm and shared on county webpage and social media
- **1,130 participants!**
- Survey helped to provide an inclusive picture of community values and needs



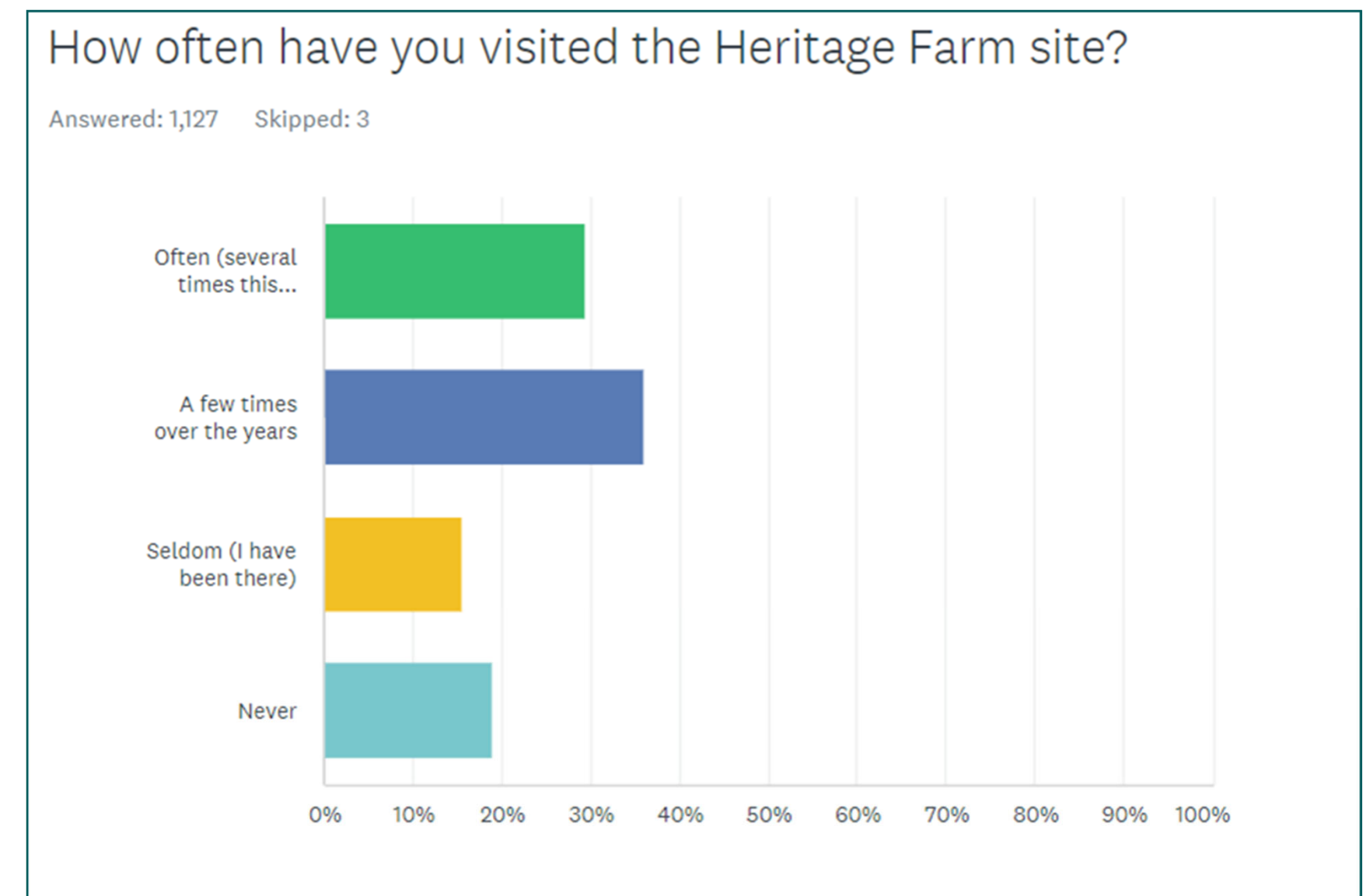
Public engagement results - survey

What was asked?

- Visitor and involvement information.
- Top three master plan priorities for implementation.
- Suggestions for improving the farm as a destination.
- Funding sources that should be explored.
- Thoughts on the Farm’s future.

Who participated?

- 65% frequent Heritage Farm visitors
- 35% seldom or never visit



Public engagement results - survey

Convergence of views between frequent users and seldom/never visitors

Top priorities for Master Plan improvements

	Frequent Users	Seldom/Never	Total
Outdoor classroom/shelter	68%	56%	64%
New greenhouses	64%	45%	57%
Interpretive trails	59%	65%	61%
Public access/parking	26%	46%	33%

Suggestions for new activities/programs

	Frequent Users	Seldom/Never	Total
Farmers market	70%	79%	73%
More educational opportunities	53%	41%	49%
Public events	53%	61%	56%
Farm to table business	40%	50%	47%



Public engagement results - survey

There's broad support for finding new funding sources

Funding sources to be explored

	Frequent Users	Seldom/Never	Total
County General Fund	78%	56%	72%
Private contributions	75%	80%	76%
Rent	60%	63%	61%
Farm user fees	46%	56%	50%



Public engagement results – survey recurring themes

1. Heritage Farm must be preserved as a unique asset to honor and celebrate Clark County's agricultural roots.

"It is important to preserve this valuable place to help community members learn how to grow food for themselves and commercially."

"Please don't screw it up and develop it beyond anything related to agriculture. We are losing way too much farmland."

"It needs to be preserved for the future. People need more connection with our food sources and how to feed themselves with the small amount of land that they might have."



Public engagement results – survey recurring themes

2. Better publicity about Farm activities could increase public use.

- *“This site is for farmers and gardeners. More communications and advertising for this site would be helpful to reach those in the greater community.”*
- *“I only knew about it because I live in Hazel Dell and drive by it.”*
- *“Community advertising would be great. We live just down the road and had no idea this was even open to the public.”*
- *“I don’t think people are really aware of this site and what it offers. there needs to be more public outreach.”*



Public engagement results – survey recurring themes

3. New facilities and activities should be considered for the Heritage Farm site—without displacing the current uses.

- *“I would love to see a year-round farmers market there that supported incubator business on-site and partnered with other farms to preserve farmland in the county”*
- *“Please make accessible trails”*
- *“It is worth figuring out a good purpose(s) for the farmland to continue to exist. Don’t be afraid to try many different things on a small scale—learn from the ones that fail and grow the ones that succeed.”*
- *“Farm-to-table dinners, festivals, etc. More community events please!”*



Public engagement results – survey recurring themes

4. New funding sources can be considered to support Heritage Farm—recognizing this is a public space that will always require some public funds.

“If it’s mixed use, cost coverage should also be mixed—there are plenty of sources and might be nice to look at partners. Grants, there are a lot of grants for food-related topics. I also think a small portion could come from taxpayers, especially if it grows to support education programs.”

“I think that if you charge farmers market vendors a small fee it would draw a lot of attention and be a centerpiece to the Hazel Dell area.”

“Do whatever it takes to stay there forever! Thank you for being there for our community. We need our farms.”



Participation engagement – community leader interviews

Who participated?

A cross-section of site neighbors, farm users, community partners, and County staff associated with Heritage Farm

Clark County Council Chair	Evergreen Public Schools	Vancouver Farmers Market	Latinos Unidos y Floreciendo	Cowlitz Tribe Chairwoman
WSU Extension	Clark County Parks & Lands	Clark County Public Health	Friends of Heritage Farm	Clark Cowlitz Farm Bureau

Why interview community leaders?

Listen to perspectives from community members who share an interest in Heritage Farm

Learn more about project opportunities and constraints

Continue to build a project culture of collaboration



Participation engagement – community leader interviews

1. The persons interviewed cherish Heritage Farm—but some worry about its future.

“Honor the history of the Poor Farm and the site’s agricultural heritage.”

“This is an important piece of real estate. Proceed with care and caution to be sure the plan brings value to the community.”

2. Even those observers who frequent the site aren’t familiar with all of the current activities and uses.

“I work with the Snap Ed team and Food Bank but am not familiar with much else.”

“It is a large site with some educational and research opportunities.”



Participation engagement – community leader interviews

3. This group’s preferred future for the Heritage Farm is to continue and expand on today’s assorted activities.

“I talk less about what it is now and more about what it could be. The farm is an underrealized opportunity.”

“I want to use my voice and role to amplify everything LULAC is working on as it directly connects to supporting public health.”

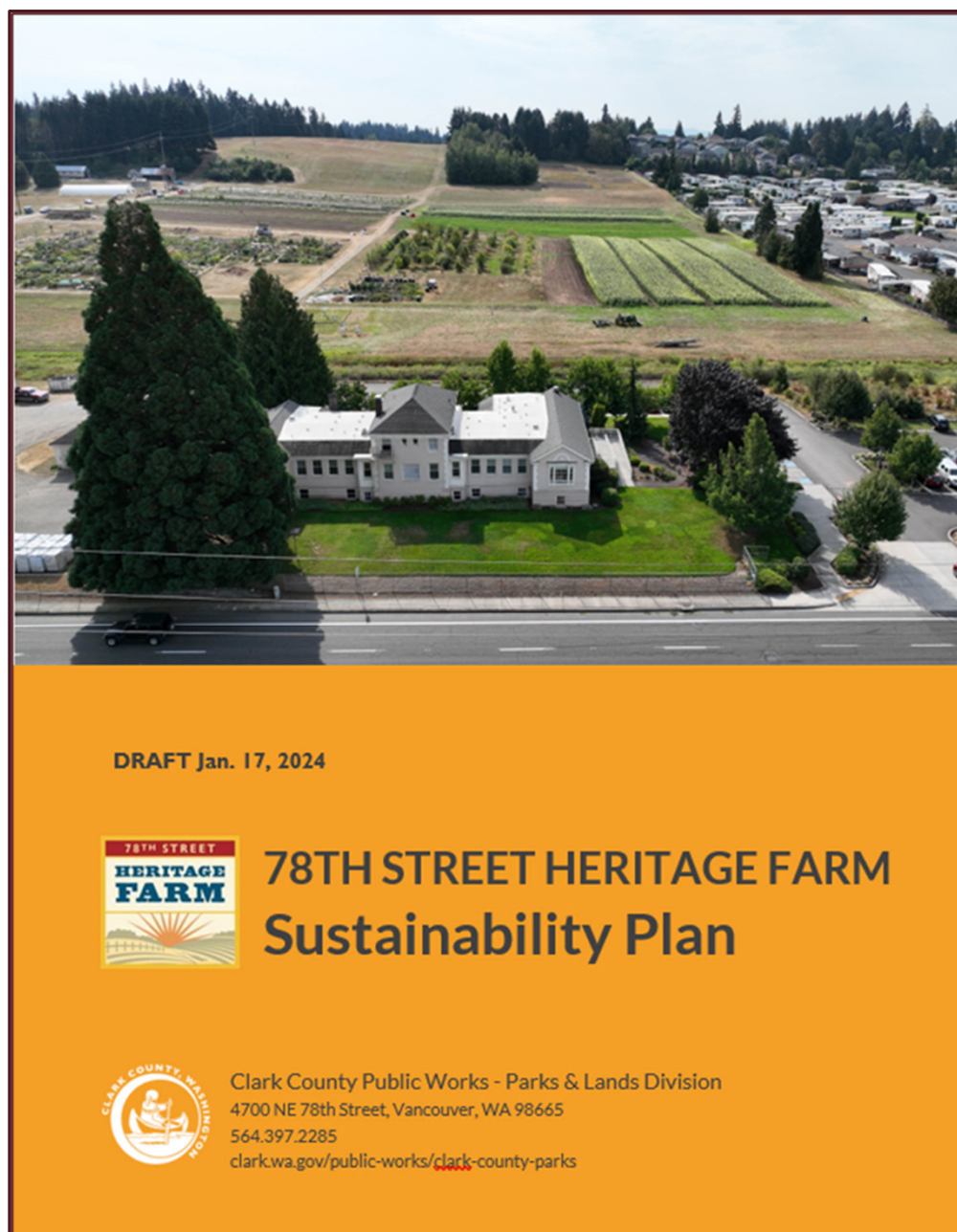
4. Participants generally concur with the County Council’s goals for the site.

Council Goals for Heritage Farm

- ✓ Implement the Master Plan
- ✓ Increase public access
- ✓ Improve financial sustainability



Plan overview



The plan details:

- **Public process** (discussed earlier)
- **Context surrounding Heritage Farm including:**
 - Cultural and historical resources and current uses.
 - Past planning and studies
- **Financial analysis** including County expenditures and volunteer contributions.
 - Parks and Lands averages \$170,000/year in expenses to operate Heritage Farm.
 - *Sustainability at Heritage Farm is the ability for the farm to continue to provide many public services the current programs provide while seeking strategies to reduce general fund obligations the County currently commits to farm operations through management of land, equipment and labor associated with farming activities.*



Plan overview

- **Financial analysis** (continued):
 - **Volunteer contributions** – In 2022 a total of 17,832 hours and \$442,774 in donations were provided for farm projects. This resulted in almost 100k lbs. of fresh produce being donated to the Clark County Food Bank along with many other programs impacting the community.
- **Site analysis**
 - **Three distinct environmental and use zones** exist:
 - Zone 1 – Agricultural operations and support – 19 acres
 - Zone 2 – Fallow land slopes less than 15% - 37 acres
 - Zone 3 – Encumbered land – 23 acres
 - **Topographic constraints** – steep slopes on the southern portion of the site limit crop types.
 - **Fallow land** – areas around Cougar Creek (north end of the farm) have been inactive or unused creating challenges.
 - **Surrounding land use** – farming in an urban area surrounded by residential and commercial properties limit options for the site.
 - **Agriculture production feasibility** – Property is a high value agricultural site because of high quality soils and onsite water availability.



Plan overview - alternatives

The plan details (continued):

- **Operational alternatives presented:**



- **Alternative 1**

- Continuing to operate the farm in the current manner with some modifications of the revenue generation options identified by the planning staff and steering committee.
- This alternative falls short of meeting both the financial and public access goals set forth for the development of this plan.

- **Alternative 2**

- This plan would require an RFP to seek selection of a third party (non-governmental organization) to operate the farm. This alternative was largely discounted by the steering committee due to unknowns that would come along with identifying, negotiating and contracting with a non-governmental organization.
- The primary challenge would be identification of a partner with the financial capacity to operate the farm in a manner that meets the guiding principles of the master plan and not utilize a county provided subsidy.



Plan overview - alternatives

The plan details (continued):



- **Alternative 3 – PREFERRED**

- An amalgamation of the six alternatives that selected similar programmatic and revenue generation options developed by the steering committee in the Spring 2023 workshops.
- Alternative 3 meets all the criteria and project goals. While it may not entirely offset the draw on County financial resources, it would decrease or potentially eliminate the need for General Fund support by creating a public asset that functions more like a community park.



Plan overview – Alternative 3 (PREFERRED)

Agricultural programmatic elements		Educational programmatic elements	
WSU Extension Services	Multi-use building for private and public events	Community outdoor classroom	School district programming
Incubator farming program	Farm events programming	Recreational programmatic elements	
Community gardens	Farm-park amenities	Community trails – open to the public.	Children’s play area
Agricultural leased space	Farm historic tours	Cost recovery elements	
Agricultural research leased space	Composting education	General Fund	Metropolitan Park District Fund
Food production for underserved communities	Continuing agricultural education for adults	Lease adjustments	Fee for farm services
Farm stand / vendor leased space	Farm to table programming	Friends of the Farm fundraising	Educational institute partnership
Horticulture education programming		Grants	Donations
		Revenue percentage from sold items	Vancouver/Clark County leaf litter composting and sale program

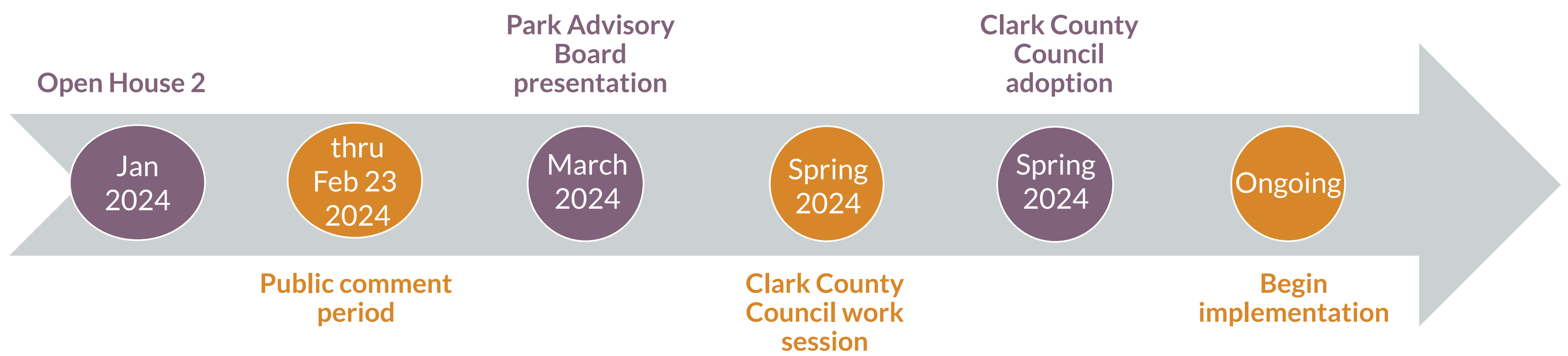


Plan overview – Next steps

1. Improve relationships and communication lines with existing farm partners.
2. Improve inclusion and equity in farm access through intentional engagement with advocates of historically underrepresented groups in the community.
3. Build on the trust developed during the development of this plan.
4. Explore additional farm partner relationships as they relate to the guiding principles.
5. Finalize the land lease program to recoup the county’s costs.
6. Develop a fee for service program.
7. Analyze current cost sharing and operations relationships between the county and farm partners.
8. Develop a first phase of public access improvements to include interpretive and recreational trails, educational sites and general recreation amenities.
9. Develop a safety and security plan associated with public access.
10. Explore additional revenue options such as the Vancouver / Clark County leaf litter composting and sales program.



Next steps



How to provide feedback

- Executive summary and the full sustainability plan are posted on the plan development website.
- Please use comment cards in the room and leave with staff.
- Comments can be emailed to us at PWProjects@clark.wa.gov.
Comments will be accepted thru February 23, 2024.
- Join our mailing list to receive updates and meeting notifications throughout the adoption process:
 - Add your email address to the meeting sign in sheet or email Lynde.Wallick@clark.wa.gov





Q & A Session

Online attendees:
Please enter your questions in the chat box. Staff will read them aloud in the room.

In-person attendees:

- Please raise your hand and we will come to you.
- One question per person, unless time permits.
- Please respect everyone's time and hold your question to 60 seconds.
- Please be respectful of other attendees and staff.



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Thank you for joining us! The presentation has ended.

Read the plan, learn more about its development & current farm uses:

clark.wa.gov/public-works/heritage-farm-sustainability-plan



Comments and questions:

- *Please submit written comments:*
- Email us: PWProjects@clark.wa.gov
- *Join stakeholders' list:*
- Receive more direct communication
- Email: Lynde.Wallick@clark.wa.gov



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