



# Participating in land use and code amendment decisions

## Information on providing testimony

Clark County encourages, promotes, and uses citizen input in its decision making. You can influence land use matters within Clark County by providing comments on proposed land use and code amendment proposals.

When considering your comments, understand that the Planning Commission and County Council decisions are based on how well the proposal meets the requirements in Clark County Code Title 40, the Clark County Comprehensive Plan, and/or state law. The decision making body can only consider testimony that speaks to the relevant criteria.

### Preparing Testimony

When preparing your testimony, be factual in your testimony. Review the Staff Report and other related information. The project's webpage will have background information on the project and the Staff Report is available and posted online at least 15 days prior to the hearing.

The Staff Report will cite the exact relevant sections of county code, state law, and/or county policy, so review them carefully and base your comments on those requirements. Remember to stick to the issues and criteria of the application or to criteria you think should be addressed.

You can submit written testimony in advance of the hearing, at the hearing, or provide oral testimony at the hearing.

### Submitting written testimony

Anyone wishing to give testimony can submit their comments to the clerks of the body in which the hearing is before.

Planning Commission	Clark County Council
<p><b>Mail</b> Clark County Planning Commission Sonja Wiser, Clerk of the Planning Commission PO Box 9810, Vancouver, WA 98666-9810</p> <p><b>Email</b> <a href="mailto:sonja.wiser@clark.wa.gov">sonja.wiser@clark.wa.gov</a></p>	<p><b>Mail</b> Clark County Council Rebecca Messinger, Clerk to the Council PO BOX 5000, Vancouver, WA 98666-5000</p> <p><b>Email</b> <a href="mailto:rebecca.messinger@clark.wa.gov">rebecca.messinger@clark.wa.gov</a></p>



## Providing testimony at the hearing

Public hearings are usually held in the Public Service Center's 6th floor hearing room at 1300 Franklin St., Vancouver. Sign in sheets to testify are available on a table in the room. Please fill in all of the requested information if you would like to testify. If you have indicated a desire to speak, your name will be called during the public comment portion of the hearing.

## Know what to expect at the hearing

You may want to consider watching a Planning Commission or County Council hearing on CVTV to help familiarize yourself with the hearing procedures. The [Planning Commission](#) and [County Council](#) websites include links to videos of previous Planning Commission and Council hearings that you can view online.

## Tips on testifying

Effective speakers use clear, direct language. Do not feel you need to use legal jargon when preparing your comments. It often helps to create an outline of your testimony. Base your outline on the relevant approval criteria. How does the proposal meet or not meet the approval criteria? It is also a good idea to rehearse and note how long it takes you to make your comments. Typically, testimony is limited to 3 minutes to ensure that all present have an opportunity to testify.

Please remember that personal attacks toward any participants, including those running the meeting, county staff, the applicants, or any audience members, are inappropriate and tend to draw attention away from the important issue-specific points you wish to make. Direct your comments to the decision making body (Planning Commission or County Council) rather than staff, the applicant, or other people that testified.

**Be complete, and concise.** Decision makers are generally inundated with information. They appreciate short, concise comments. Presenting them with 50 pages of material on the night of the meeting does not afford them enough time to adequately review the information you want them to have. If you are providing oral testimony, it is helpful to the hearing participants to receive a copy or outline of your comments. This is a good strategy for expanding on limited time at the podium. Some testifiers deliver a shorter version of a longer written piece that they hand out. It is helpful to bring 10 copies of your written materials.

**Be clear about your position.** Do you agree with the staff recommendation? If not, what parts do you oppose? Instead of repeating information that you feel has been adequately addressed by someone else, state your agreement with another's comments. It is more than OK to disagree with the staff recommendation or any testimony provided at the hearing; the decision makers want to hear from all sides.

**Testifying as a group.** If you are representing a group of people or an organization, state this fact at the outset of your presentation. In your testimony, clarify your role and interest in the application. Instead of each group member restating the same issue, it is much more effective to have each group member address a different issue and to state that they support the previous testimony on an issue.

**Visual aids.** You may supplement your oral or written testimony with presentation boards, maps, photos, or PowerPoint presentations. Once presented at a public hearing, any boards, photos, maps, etc. must remain with the county as part of the official record (so make copies for yourself, because you won't be able to take them home with you). If you are making a presentation via computer, the presentation must be delivered to county staff 48-hours prior to the meeting. Please coordinate the details with staff well in advance of the meeting.

## Procedural Information

### When will the decision be made?

*Planning Commission hearings:* Unless the hearing is continued or the record left open to accept additional written testimony, the Planning Commission recommends approval or denial, with or without certain changes. They may also take no action. If a decision is made a final recommendation will be posted online.

*Clark County Council hearings:* Unless the hearing is continued or the record left open to accept additional written testimony, the council may approve, deny, or modify, or give no further consideration to the application or Planning Commission recommendations.

### Can the decision be appealed?

The decisions of the Council in approving or rejecting a recommendation of the Planning Commission shall be final unless an appeal is filed with Clark County Superior Court.

See [Clark County Code 40.510.040\(E\)](#) for information about appeals.