



Clark County Housing Options Study and Action Plan

Public Participation Plan

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Project webpage: <https://www.clark.wa.gov/community-planning/housing-options-study-and-action-plan>

This Public Participation Plan will guide the public engagement process for the Clark County Housing Options Study and Action Plan. The overarching goal of the project is to enable a better understanding our local housing challenges and identify opportunities to encourage creation of additional housing that is affordable to a variety of household incomes within the unincorporated Vancouver Urban Growth Area. The intent of this Public Participation Plan is to ensure that the county facilitates a thoughtful, open, and equitable process to provide residents, workers and other interested parties meaningful opportunities to discuss housing challenges and develop solutions for their communities.

1. Project Overview

Addressing the challenges of housing shortages, high housing costs, and limited housing choices is more important than ever.

In 2018, the County Council made amendments to the development code to allow more flexibility for the development of [ADUs](#), [Cottage Housing](#), and [Manufactured Housing](#). The Washington State Legislature also recently passed new housing-related legislation. The County Council is interested in finding additional ways to provide more housing in the Vancouver Unincorporated Urban Growth Area that is attainable to people with a variety of household incomes. The project area is a large urban area with a population of 159,000, next to, but not incorporated into, the City of Vancouver.

The goal of this project is to better understand our housing market and identify barriers to providing a greater variety of housing types and the strategies needed to provide future generations with access to affordable, quality, and flexible housing opportunities.

A consultant team was hired in March of 2020 to assist the county project team. A Project Advisory Group (PAG) of local stakeholders representing a wide range of interests will be convened to provide input throughout the project and assist with recommendations to County Council. A creative and inclusive public engagement approach will be well-integrated into the project recommendation development process.



The project will include these main tasks:

Data Collection, Inventory, and Analysis: An overview of the current unincorporated Vancouver Urban Growth Area housing market will include: a housing inventory; an evaluation of housing growth, market conditions and household-level data/trends; identification of housing affordability gaps; and an evaluation of the capacity for new housing in the project area. This overview will provide information regarding the existing housing market, with a focus on the opportunities and barriers to meeting housing needs and delivering new housing units.

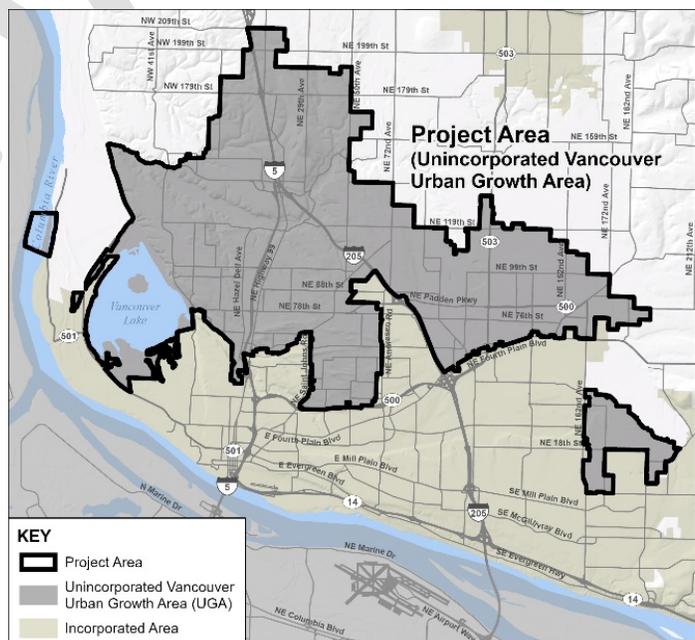
Policy and Regulatory Review: A review of the county’s comprehensive plan housing policies, zoning, and other regulations will identify barriers to creating more diverse variety of housing types at a variety of price points in the project area. There will also be a review of recent state housing legislation to identify opportunities and requirements for Clark County, and a review of other jurisdictions’ recent housing options initiatives to understand key lessons learned.

Recommendation Development: The consultant team will work closely with the PAG to develop a list of implementation ready/actionable strategies and recommendations for Planning Commission and County Council consideration using the information gathered from the data collection, inventory, and analysis task and the policy and regulatory review work. Throughout this task, check-ins with the public, Planning Commission, and County Council will also take place and integrate into the PAG recommendation development process.

The completion of the work will result in a package of information that will be the Housing Options Study and Action Plan, which will be presented to the Planning Commission and County Council for their consideration for potential policy and code changes.

Project Area

The project area includes the entire unincorporated Vancouver Urban Growth Area. The county has land use jurisdiction over this large urban area (population of 159,000), and therefore can make changes to housing policy, zoning, and other codes that regulate urban housing development in this area.



2. Public Participation Plan

A Public Participation Plan (plan) is a communication program that provides members of the public opportunities for early and continuing participation and access to key decision making processes with the Clark County Planning Commission and Clark County Council. [RCW 36.70A.035]. The plan describes the steps that Clark County will take to provide opportunities for public engagement, as well as Clark County contact information and web addresses. This plan is in addition to the public participation required by Clark County Code Sections 40.510.040 and 40.560.010.

COVID-19 has changed our lives in profound ways and has created challenges and opportunities related to how the county engages residents during this unprecedented time. Providing accessible and meaningful engagement opportunities is essential to building a strong pathway forward for this project. Successful engagement will require collaboration across sectors and interests. Successful engagement will involve organized groups and people whose voices have often been marginalized or left out of similar conversations in the past. We need policy solutions to match the story and culture of the communities they are intended to serve.

2.1 Public Participation Goals

- **Social justice and equity:** The planning team recognizes that policy and planning decisions about housing do not impact us all in the same way. Policies and zoning regulations that restrict housing types limits the opportunity for many people to find housing that fits their budget within the community in which they want to live. Community members who are most vulnerable to rising housing costs need to be at the center and forefront of this project and include a variety of groups, such as: communities of color; people with disabilities; people with limited income and resources; older adults; and young families. Strategies to work towards this goal are reflected in the Project Advisory Group make-up (Section 2.4) and through partnership with local organizations who serve our most vulnerable community members (Section 2.7).
- **Accessible participation:** Accessible participation seeks to provide low-barrier opportunities for all communities in the project area to have a say in the decision-making process. Depending on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic, events will be hosted either online and/or at community locations within the project area. For online activities, both computer and phone options will be made available. Field-trip type activities will be designed to be accessible by multiple transportation modes. Project information will be communicated to the public in multiple languages on how to request translation of project materials. Project communication will include social media, print, email, and online communication methods. (Section 2.0)
- **Meaningful participation:** Meaningful participation means the county will provide enough background and educational opportunities about the housing project, so that public participants have the information and tools they need to feel knowledgeable and informed about county processes, policies and regulations. Meaningful participation means the county will provide opportunities to listen to its constituents and hear about their lived experiences. Meaningful participation means engagement opportunities will take place early in the project process, so there is time for discussion and learning to take place and have an impact on recommendations

and decisions. Meaningful participation means that public feedback will be provided and discussed by the Project Advisory Group and shared with the Planning Commission and County Council.

- **Transparency and accountability:** Public engagement opportunities will distinguish between opportunities designed to provide information versus those that seek input and feedback on decision-making. Opportunities will be clearly defined and advertised where the public can provide timely input so that there is an opportunity to affect decisions. There will be an ongoing record of input, questions and responses, along with an online mechanism to make this information available to the public. Being transparent and clear means the public can hold the county accountable in its process and decision-making.

3. Public Participation Tools

Clark County is committed to providing multiple opportunities for public participation throughout the process. Clark County will use a variety of communication tools to inform the public and encourage their participation, including the following:

3.1 Project Website

Clark County's website will include a project webpage where interested parties can access status updates, draft documents, Project Advisory Group meeting information, engagement opportunities, public comments and other project information. The page will include who to contact for more information and an email link for questions and comments. The project's web address is:

<https://www.clark.wa.gov/community-planning/housing-options-study-and-action-plan>

3.2 Email Distribution List

An email list of interested parties will be created and maintained by Clark County. The list will be used to notify interested parties about project news and updates, and opportunities to engage in the process.

Interested parties will be added to the list by submitting a request to the Community Planning Department. To join the Housing Options Study and Action Plan listserv, contact the Planning Department at 564-397-4913, or Jacqui.Kamp@clark.wa.gov or online at

<https://www.clark.wa.gov/community-planning/get-project-updates>. If in-person events take place, there will be additional sign-up opportunities through the use of sign-in sheets.

3.3 Media

The local news media will be kept up-to-date on the Housing Options Study and Action Plan project and receive copies of all official notices. In addition, notices will be published in the paper of record, *The Columbian*.

Project communication will include social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Nextdoor.

3.4 Project Advisory Group

The Clark County Council will appoint a Project Advisory Group (PAG) to develop recommendations for the Planning Commission and Council. The project consultant team conducted preliminary stakeholder interviews to learn about key housing issues in the unincorporated Vancouver Growth Area and to better understand the range of perspectives in the community (Appendix A). Based on this research, the consultant team is recommending that the PAG include representatives of the following interests, so that there is broad representation including those most vulnerable to rising housing costs and displacement, people working in the housing industry, and parties responsible for implementing housing-related regulations (up to 18 members plus two county council liaisons):

Representation	Perspective
County Council (liaisons)	<i>Elected leaders with decision-making authority</i>
City of Vancouver	<i>County seat and largest city in Clark County</i>
Public housing developer	<i>Affordable housing development through federal and state aid</i>
Nonprofit developer	<i>Housing development through public-private partnerships</i>
For-Profit developer	<i>Market-based housing development</i>
Innovative Builder	<i>Builder of innovative housing types, cutting-edge practices and funding mechanisms</i>
Schools	<i>Planning for student/community growth</i>
Feasibility and financing	<i>Housing financing and development feasibility</i>
Real estate	<i>Understanding of housing market, buyer needs and preferences</i>
Older adults	<i>Housing access for populations aging-in-place or with shifting housing needs</i>
Community/neighborhood group	<i>Local, neighborhood-based interest groups</i>
Houseless community	<i>Housing access for most vulnerable/at-risk populations</i>
Communities of color	<i>Housing access for populations disproportionately affected by systems of racism and oppression</i>
Persons with disabilities	<i>Housing access for populations with special needs and accommodations</i>
Youth	<i>Future housing access for first-time homebuyers, new workforce</i>
Large employer	<i>Driver of regional wages and housing needs for employees</i>

Councilor John Blom and Councilor Julie Olson have agreed to participate as county liaisons for the project and the Project Advisory Group. It is also expected that other guests and expert perspectives will be invited and brought in to the PAG meetings to participate in the discussions. Examples could include, without limitation, county staff, such as Clark County Departments of Community Development, Community Planning, Public Works, Public Health, and Community Services; and public service providers, such as C-TRAN and Clark Regional Wastewater District, among others.

The PAG will meet approximately 10 times throughout the course of the project. PAG responsibilities include reviewing and commenting on work products, guiding public outreach and engagement efforts, acting as liaisons to specific constituencies or interest groups, hosting public events, encouraging community members to participate in the process, and acting as champions of the Clark County Housing Options Study and Action Plan that emerge from the process.

Community Planning commits to holding public meetings at convenient times and at locations that are accessible. If necessary, the meetings will be conducted remotely with phone and online options for joining. Meeting information will be made available through the project webpage, email distribution list, and paper of record, *The Columbian*.

3.5 Written Comments

Interested parties will be encouraged to provide comments to Clark County by letter, email, or web-based forms throughout the public process. All comments received will be forwarded to the Planning Commission and Clark County Council for their consideration prior to their hearings.

3.6 Public Meetings at Key Milestones

Public meetings (or events) will be hosted at key project milestones. The public meeting formats will vary and may include workshops, open houses, presentations, and discussion groups. All public meetings will be interactive, use creative activities to engage participants and will offer a variety of ways to provide input. Clark County will provide auxiliary aids/services to persons with disabilities, as requested, to increase access to these meetings. Project information that is communicated to the public will also include information in multiple languages on how to request translation of project materials.

4. Additional outreach tools

Staff will seek additional outreach and information sharing opportunities as possible, especially where precautions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and physical distancing are concerned. Staff understand that unreliable broadband, limited technology access, and differences in communication preferences and options means that not all audiences will be reached through online engagement opportunities. We plan to employ multiple communication and participation tools as part of the outreach strategy, to ensure that anyone who wants to participate can do so. Approaches under consideration include:

- Informational videos about the project or project concepts
- Independent walking/driving tours of different housing types
- ArcGIS StoryMaps to share project information spatially and visually
- Social media to share project information and housing news and hear community member perspectives
- Online questionnaires
- Phone interviews
- Text questionnaires
- Printed materials
- Interactive poster board displays
- Mailings
- Print advertisements/flyers

Staff will reach out to local community organizations to activate grassroots techniques to help ensure engagement opportunities are directed appropriately to target audiences.

5. Public Comment Periods and Hearings

The Clark County Planning Commission and Clark County Council will hold televised (through CVTV) public hearings before final adoption of recommendations related to the project that the County Council chooses to consider. Interested parties are encouraged to provide comments for review and provide testimony during hearings.

Public notice of all hearings will state who is holding the comment period and/or hearing, the date and time, and the location of any public hearing. Notices will be published per official policy and comply with all other legal requirements such as the Americans with Disabilities Act. A notice will be sent to the email list (3.2) and the Department of Commerce distribution list.

6. List of stakeholders

Clark County will engage multiple stakeholder groups, including the following:

- Clark County community members, especially those that live/work within the project area
- Affordable housing providers and advocates
- Building/development (nonprofit and for-profit)/real estate community
- Business community
- Cities
- Communities of color
- Community-based organizations
- County agencies
- County commissions/advisory boards (Planning, Youth, Aging, DEAB, Parks, etc.)
- Cowlitz Indian Tribe
- Economic development
- Environmental community
- Faith-based
- Health care
- Housing organizations
- Neighborhood associations
- Older adults
- Public service providers (C-TRAN, Clark Regional
- Schools and higher education
- State Government Agencies
- Youth

All parties will be informed and invited to participate throughout the process. Notification will be accomplished via the methods outlined in Section 3 of this document.

7. Public Participation Timeline

The following is a general timeline of the Housing Options Study and Action Plan project. We anticipate exact project milestone dates to shift as needed during the project, especially with the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 and the unforeseen ways that this pandemic may impact project work.

Clark County Housing Options Study and Action Plan - Schedule

Tasks	2020										2021										
	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1. Stakeholder Interviews & Issue Assessment			◆																		
2. Project Advisory Group Convening					■																
3. Data Collection, Inventory, & Analysis																					
4. Policy & Regulatory Review																					
5. Recommendation Development									■	◆	★	■	◆	★	■	◆	★	■	◆	★	■
6. Finalize Action Plan & Supporting Documentation																					
7. Legislative Process Support																		◆	◆	◆	◆

- = Project Advisory Group (PAG) Meeting
- ◆ = County Council/Planning Commission Meetings
- ★ = Public Events

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