

City of Lynden Comprehensive Plan 2025 Update Public Participation Plan and Preliminary Scoping Schedule

Purpose

This document is intended to guide the City in reviewing the comprehensive plan and outline a clear path to ensure broad and accessible public participation in this update.

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires cities and counties to conduct outreach to ensure “early and continuous public participation” in developing and amending comprehensive plans and development regulations (RCW 36.70A.140). The GMA also requires that local programs clearly identify and disseminate the schedules and procedures for public participation in the periodic update process (RCW 36.70A.130(2)(a)).

To ensure compliance, the Washington State Department of Commerce recommends local governments begin the periodic update process by adopting a public participation plan. It identifies the scope of the proposed update, when legislative action is expected, and how the public can participate or comment. The Planning and Community Development Department encourages the City Council to adopt this public participation plan.

Goals of the Public Participation Plan

1. Outline a path to ensure broad and accessible participation. This includes identifying key interest groups, soliciting input from the public and the business community, and ensuring no single group or interest dominates the process.
2. Identify vulnerable populations and overburdened communities within the City and, if identified conduct outreach to solicit feedback from these groups. Vulnerable populations are groups that are more likely to be at higher risk for poor health outcomes in response to environmental harms, due to adverse socioeconomic factors such as unemployment, high housing and transportation costs relative to income, limited access to nutritious food and adequate health care, linguistic isolation, and other factors that negatively affect health outcomes and increase vulnerability to the effects of environmental harms, and sensitively factors such as low birth weight and higher rates of hospitalization. Overburdened communities are geographic areas where vulnerable populations face combined, multiple environmental harms and health impacts.
3. Maintain effective communication and coordination with Whatcom County and surrounding jurisdictions, and invite tribal participation throughout the update process.

4. Distribute information and post notices efficiently including notifying the public of all meetings, hearings, workshops, and legislative actions.
5. Ensure that elected officials and staff throughout the organization are fully aware of and understand community and stakeholder concerns.

Scope of Work

To organize the complex process of updating the Comprehensive Plan, the Planning and Community Development Department has divided essential elements into two phases. During Phase I Pre-Planning, the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations will be reviewed for compliance with state law. This process will identify area of the plan that must be amended using the Department of Commerce general checklist and critical areas regulations checklist as tools to identify portions of the plan needing. Subsequently, the Planning Commission and the Council must establish a scope of work for the update including those areas identified in the checklists as needing to be updated. The preliminary scope of work and schedule are intended to be general rather than specific because it is difficult to know the full extent of the required work until Phase I is complete.

Phase II will address those issues identified in Phase I. Throughout Phase I and Phase II, interaction with community will provide information to the process. To assist, the Planning Department has categorized work associated with the update as mandatory or strongly recommended. This will accommodate budgetary and staffing constraints. A summary is provided below.

Table 1 – Potential Work Items		
Typical GMA Requirements	Mandatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consideration of GMA amendments ▪ Urban growth areas (UGAs) and population / housing unit projections. ▪ Critical areas regulations ▪ Internal consistency ▪ Development regulation consistency
New GMA Requirements	Mandatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HB 1220 substantially amends housing-related provisions of the GMA (RCW 36.70A.070(2)). ▪ HB 1717 adds new requirement regarding tribal participation in planning efforts (RCW 36.70A.040 and 36.70A.190). ▪ SB 5593 adds new elements regarding changes to planning and/or modifying urban growth areas (RCW 36.70A.130(3)). ▪ SB 5818 promotes housing construction in cities through amendments to and limiting appeals under the state environmental policy act (SEPA) and the GMA (RCW 36.70A.070(2)).

Required by Whatcom County or the Comprehensive Plan		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordination on UGAs
Important Planning Considerations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a benchmark and monitoring system to guide future planning work. ▪ Rewrite and enhancement of the Comprehensive Plan to increase readability. ▪ Incorporate Transportation and Capitol Facilities Element into a simultaneous update.
Desirable Planning Considerations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Update Historic Business District Sub-Area Plan ▪ Create a Sub-Area Plan for the West Lynden Gateway Sub-Area

Phase I

Phase I will begin with a thorough review of GMA requirements and compilation of amendments since the 20016 update. The department will review the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations to determine whether revisions will be required to ensure consistency with GMA amendments.

The City also will need to analyze its Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) to ensure they are sized to accommodate 20 years of population, housing needs, and employment growth (based on an adopted OFM range). If, during this analysis, the City determines a UGA is too small corrective actions will be identified. They could include altering the size of UGAs, changing the allowed uses and densities, or a combination of actions. Any proposed changes must be fully consistent with and supported by adopted Countywide Planning Policies (CWPPs) and capital facilities plans.

Because plans and policies of other local governments and utility providers must be consistent with the adopted Countywide Planning Policies, this step will require high-level intergovernmental coordination. To address this need, the Council and Planning and Community Development Department have committed to working cooperatively with all involved parties as a forum for reviewing and, if need be, revising CWPPs.

Phase II

Once the initial review and analysis are complete (Phase I), the Washington State Department of Commerce recommends local governments adopt an ordinance or resolution stating a review has been completed and identifying elements of the Comprehensive Plan or development regulations that will be updated. This step will result in a report documenting changes in the

City of Lynden since adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, areas of the plan or development regulations that must be updated or amended, and amendments or changes, which although not mandatory, the board and Planning Commission have chosen to consider.

Phase II essentially will be a stage where issues identified in Phase I are addressed through plan or code revisions. Until Phase I is complete, Community Planning cannot identify a detailed scope of work for Phase II. However, the department has prepared a general outline of tasks to complete in conjunction with the periodic update. The outline has been incorporated into the attached "Public Participation Plan & Preliminary Scope of Work." A more detailed scope of work will be prepared for Phase II at the completion of Phase I.

Public Participation Program Structure

To best use the City of Lynden's limited planning resources, this plan identifies both essential public participation strategies that will be employed as well as optional strategies which could be employed if resources are available. The estimated completion dates for each step are indeed estimates. In some cases, final action may occur before or after the target date because of constrained resources, need for additional intergovernmental collaboration, or unforeseen circumstances.

Techniques and Strategies

The public participation methods employed by the City of Lynden may include:

Innovative Public Involvement Technology. In addition to traditional outreach methods below, the City of Lynden will use innovative technology. The goal is to reach beyond the individuals who typically attend public meetings to encourage comments from a broader audience. Technology based tools could include:

- Social media
- Electronic voting machines
- Online survey / polls
- Planning & Community Development Website

Public workshops, public meetings, and open houses. Informal gatherings to solicit public feedback on City of Lynden's planning efforts. Workshops and/or listening posts may involve presentations by staff, question and answer sessions and interactive activities. Community Planning commits to hold meetings at convenient times, and at locations that are accessible. Information is made available either through presentations by technical staff (public meeting) or through display exhibits (open house). The Department will present material online to create an alternative "open house" for citizens unable or unwilling to attend in person.

Public notification of hearings (agendas, etc). The public is notified of Community Planning meetings and events primarily through publishing in the Lynden Tribune, the City's website, and email communication. The Planning Commission and City Council packets of information al

material are made available on the City's website when a formal public process is conducted before the Planning Commission or the City Council.

City of Lynden Website. The Planning and Community Development Department will maintain information about events related to the Comprehensive Plan update, the status of the update, and provide information regarding the opportunities to contribute. The site will include a meeting calendar with electronic copies of agendas, upcoming meetings, announcements, and notices of meetings. The website also offers links to archives of completed plans and any relevant studies.

City / County coordination meetings. The Planning and Community Development Department will coordinate with Whatcom County on countywide issues that affect the City of Lynden and its UGAs. The City will also be cooperatively working with the County's planning consultant to develop consensus on countywide issues and distributions such as emergency housing needs and revisions to urban growth areas.

Technical advisory groups. The Community Development Department may use technical advisory groups to solicit guidance on complex technical issues. The groups will include members who have specific knowledge of or interest in specialized topics and may have members from business and interest groups, trade organizations, service providers, municipalities and county departments.

Email distribution lists. Members of the public will have the opportunity to join an email distribution list which will be promoted and maintained by the Planning and Community Development Department. The list will be used to disseminate announcements and notices as well as online links to documents or surveys. To join the City of Lynden Comprehensive Plan Update mailing list, contact Dave Timmer at timmerd@lyndenwa.org or call (360) 354-5532.

Stakeholder outreach. Stakeholders for the Comprehensive Plan update include the general public, representatives of senior citizen groups or other specific demographics, business groups, the school district, public health organizations, neighborhood and civic organizations, public agencies, or environmental protection / enhancement groups.

News releases. The City will prepare news releases and distribute them to general news media, specialized media, and other local information providers throughout the update process. News releases will also be distributed or linked via the email distribution list.

Planning Commission and Community Development Committee work sessions. The Planning and Community Development Department will schedule work sessions as needed with the Planning Commission and the Community Development Committee to solicit feedback and guidance on specific issues or update these groups on the status of the Comprehensive Plan update.

Notification and availability of information. The City of Lynden will ensure meetings, work sessions and hearings are publicized as required by state law or city code. The City will make every effort to post all relevant documents on the city website. In addition, a project file will be maintained for public review at the Planning and Community Development Department in City Hall, 300 4th Street, 2nd Floor, Lynden.

Preliminary Schedule. The Planning and Community Development Department will continue to review State requirements and work with a land use planning consultant to identify priorities for the Comprehensive Plan Update throughout Phase I. Staff will work with the Planning Commission and the Community Development Committee to execute this plan and schedule and modify as additional information and opportunities become available.

The planning phases include Pre-Planning in Phase I followed by Data Analysis and Plan Development in Phase II. This leaves about 5 months for the plan to be reviewed by various agencies and discussed in public hearings prior to adoption. The deadline to adopt is June 30, 2025.

