

**CITY OF STEVENSON, WASHINGTON**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM**

**AGENDA TITLE:** Overview of the Integrated Shoreline Public Access and Trails Plan

**DEPARTMENT:** Community Development

**PRESENTED BY:** Alex Capron, AICP, Senior Planner - DCG/Watershed

**PROJECT SUMMARY**

The City is completing an Integrated Shoreline Public Access and Trails Plan (Shoreline Public Access Plan), as funded by Washington State Department of Ecology as part of their Shoreline Master Program (SMP) competitive grant pilot program for the 2021 – 2023 grant biennium.

As reasons for this planning document, the City prioritizes continuous public pedestrian access in shoreline jurisdiction along the shorelines and shorelands of the Columbia River, Rock Creek and Rock Cove, within both City limits and the City's urban growth area (SMP Public Access policy 4.6.2(1)). Shoreline jurisdiction roughly encompasses all waterbodies within City limits, including 200 feet landward the Ordinary High Water Mark.

This plan is a direct result of the City's recent Shoreline Master Program (SMP) Comprehensive Update and Periodic Review, prioritizing public access to shorelines of the State, along with environmental resource protection and water dependent use. This is backed by state law within the Shoreline Management Act (SMA), per Washington Advisory Code (WAC) 173-26-176(3)(a) -underline emphasized-:

*“Alterations of the natural condition of the shorelines of the state, in those limited instances when authorized, shall be given priority for... shoreline recreational uses including but not limited to parks, marinas, piers, and other improvements facilitating public access to shorelines of the state... and other development that will provide an opportunity for substantial numbers of the people to enjoy the shorelines of the state.”*

In addition, the City's SMP calls for this Shoreline Public Access Plan to address public access accordingly (SMP 4.6.2(6)):

*The City's should develop a comprehensive and integrated public access and trail plan (consistent with WAC 173-26-221(4)) that identifies specific public access needs and opportunities to replace these site-by-site requirements. Such plan should identify a preference for pervious over impervious surfaces, where feasible.*

The efficiencies providing such a plan result in greater efficiencies and understanding for both City and public/private developers in showing a defensible planning strategy for implementing public access trail routes, improvements and other required amenities, while keeping a clear delineation between public versus private-only access to shorelines of the state.

The goal of this plan is to distill planning-level documentation, spatial analysis, and public input into a set of prioritized shoreline projects within and connecting shoreline jurisdiction for future grant funding applications with agencies such as the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office.

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

This is a visually-based introductory presentation to inform Planning Commission of the public process and analysis measures for this Shoreline Public Access Plan. No formal decisions will be made at this meeting.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

None.

## **SCHEDULE**

- Project Kick-off (October 2023)
- Public Engagement Plan (January 2023)
- Public Meeting #1 Open House (February 2023)
- **Planning Commission Meeting - April 10th, 2023**
- Public Meeting #2 Charrette April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023
- Planning Commission Meeting – May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023
- City Council Work Session – June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023

## **PROJECT OVERVIEW**

The most recent Open House (held February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023) was well attended, with over 20 total attendees present and 133 comments received on an array of thematic maps. These maps displayed physical and environmental constraints, existing networks and land ownership, and shoreline experiences (visual, land and water-based). A general summary of public comments can be found in Figure 1 below:

# THEMES

## Topics that keep coming up

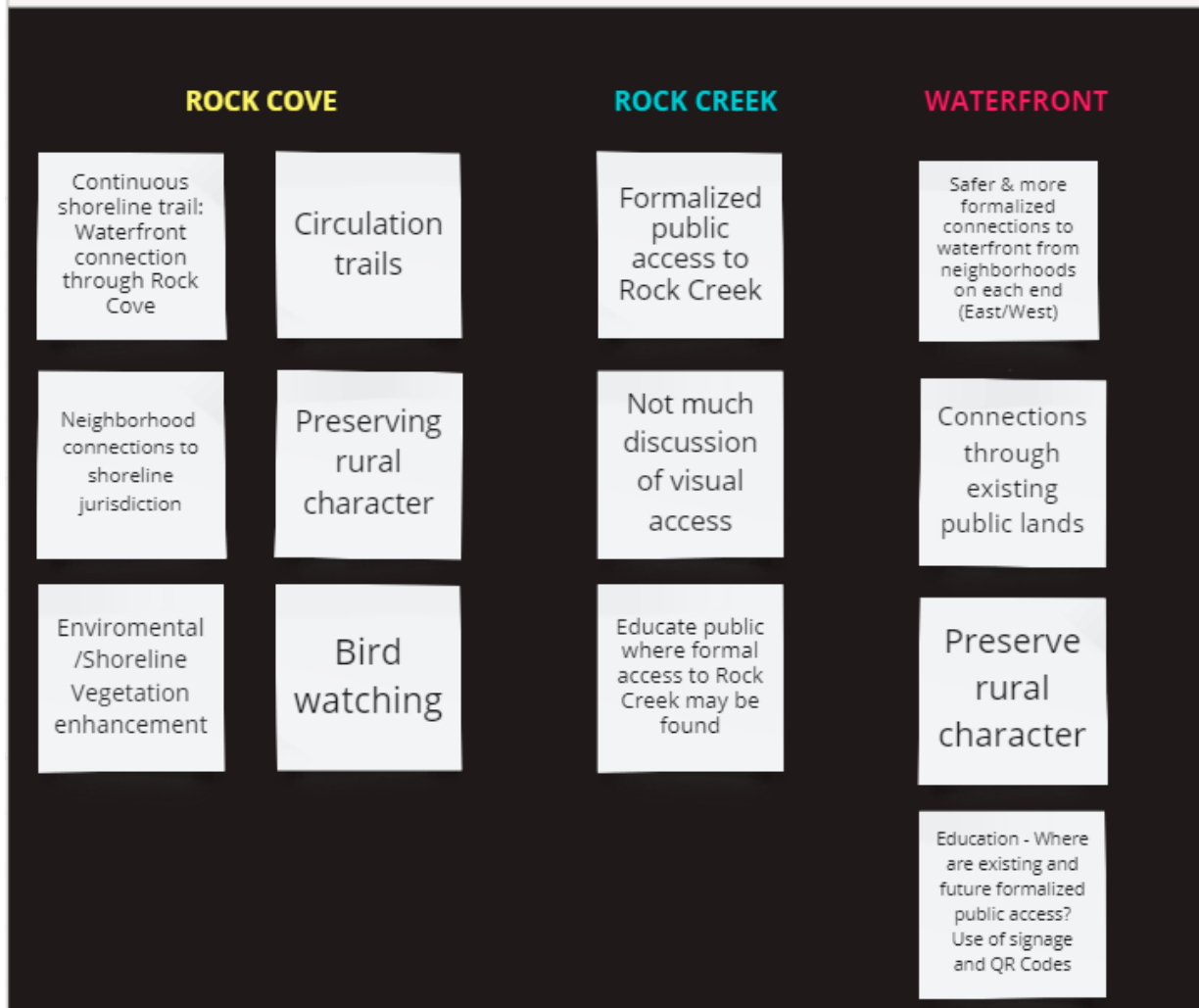


Figure 1 - February 2023 Open House Public Comment Topics

Public desires derived from the Open House include neighborhood connections to each shoreline, shoreline vegetation enhancements, preserving the rural character of the shoreline, and educating the public on where formalized public access is, or could be with future projects.

With findings from the Open House, the 2<sup>nd</sup> public meeting (held April 19<sup>th</sup> at the Stevenson Community Library) will present nine possible projects in and around shoreline jurisdiction in a charrette format. For reference, a charrette is a collaborative effort to solve specific design and/or planning topics in an efficient manner. The charrette will contain a series of three stations displaying project types, photo examples from other communities and design mock-ups to visualize possible design alternatives. This meeting will allow the public to weigh in on project preferences in an interactive and meaningful way.

These nine projects were identified via public feedback from the February open house and community survey, existing City master plan documentation, and via a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis. Specific to the GIS methodology, we assigned scores of favorability to different physical, network, and land use/ownership areas from a presence/absence standpoint. For example, Lidar-based digital elevation models (DEMs) were used to derive level of steep slope (and resulting trail suitability) where the following scores were assigned:

- 0 to 10 degree slope: score of 4 (most favorable)
- 10 to 25 degree slope: 3
- 25 to 50 degree slope: 1
- 50+ degree slope (cliff): 0 (least favorable)

In looking at ownership, City-owned parcels are assigned the highest score (12) versus other public or quasi-public property (County or Columbia Gorge Interpretive Center Museum-owned property, respectively), containing a score of 4. As a result, areas with the highest scores are most suitable for a trail, whereas lowest scores have the most constraints and difficulties constructing trail or public access facilities.

Network analysis looked at the County and City walkability layer from two perspectives, both looking at good and poor walkability area within and adjacent to shoreline jurisdiction. Here, candidate projects look at enhancements to existing pedestrian amenities, as well as candidates for improving gaps in walkable areas approaching and within shoreline jurisdiction.

Outside the report itself, the City will evaluate possible SMP amendments to make its regulations more consistent with possible projects. Formal review and adoption of these amendments will take place this summer or fall after Ecology grant window closes on June 30, 2023.