

DRAFT Public Engagement Plan

STEVENSON INTEGRATED PUBLIC ACCESS & TRAILS PLAN CITY OF STEVENSON

November 4, 2022

Prepared for:

Ben Shumaker
Planning Director
City of Stevenson
7121 E. Loop Road
Stevenson, WA 98648
(509) 472-5970
ben@ci.stevenson.wa.us



Title-page image: City of Stevenson, facing north along the Columbia River (via Department of Ecology Shoreline Oblique, 2017)

All discussions, conclusions and recommendations reflect the best professional judgment of the author(s) and are based upon information available at the time the plan was developed. All work proposed within this document does not supersede the approved scope and fee. Deliverables described will be provided within the previously agreed upon scope, budget, and timeline. No other warranty, expressed or implied, is made.



750 Sixth Street South
Kirkland, WA 98033

p 425.822.5242

f 425.827.8136

watershedco.com

Reference Number: 220123

Contact: Alex Capron, AICP
Amber Mikluscak, PLA, GISP
The Watershed Company
750 6th St S
Kirkland, WA 98033

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Overview of Integrated Shoreline Public Access & Trails Project	1
1.1.1	Engagement Goals and Strategies	2
1.1.2	Documentation of Public Involvement Effort	2
1.2	Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement	3
1.2.1	Stakeholder Identification	3
1.2.2	Outreach Strategy	5

Appendix A

Stakeholder Meeting Summaries

Appendix B

Stakeholder Meeting Sign-In Sheet

List of Tables

Table 1. Summary of Documentation	3
Table 2. Summary of Demographic Engagement	4
Table 3. Preliminary Summary of Stakeholder Interest Groups.....	5
Table 4. Public Engagement Schedule	7

1 Introduction

The City of Stevenson's current public access and trails system along shorelines of the state (shoreline jurisdiction) including Rock Creek, Rock Cove and the Columbia River provide environmental, health, and aesthetic benefits to the entire community. Even with quality existing public access points and trails found along these shorelines, these trails do not connect in a seamless way. As such, the City desires to further the public access goals of the Shoreline Master Program (SMP) via an Integrated Public Access and Trails Plan, providing a roadmap for incentivizing public access in-tandem with or prior to future development. This plan aims to bring community stakeholders together in evaluating existing and potential public access within shoreline jurisdiction (roughly 200-foot landward of the ordinary high water mark), surrounding Rock Cove, Rock Creek and the Columbia River. The City applied for and received a Department of Ecology SMP competitive grant to conduct this effort.

Like many cities in the greater northwest region, the Stevenson community is also faced with the need to support growth and development and provide adequate amenities to both existing residence and the robust tourism industry's presence in Stevenson and greater Skamania County. This plan intends to provide public stakeholders with a roadmap for future public access improvements, providing the necessary documentation needed for the City to apply for future Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grants.

The public involvement effort will be a collaboration between the City and The Watershed Company (Watershed), in which the City will lead stakeholder identification, notification, and outreach. The City will also handle event and project promotions, incorporating messaging or content developed with Watershed, if needed. Watershed will facilitate select engagement events, in order to efficiently solicit stakeholder feedback relevant to the planning and design process. This Public Engagement Plan provides a preliminary outline of the public involvement effort.

1.1 Overview of Integrated Shoreline Public Access & Trails Project

The project comprises three distinct but overlapping tasks: (1) Public Access & Trail Planning, including a high-level review of the 2010 shoreline inventory and characterization report and updated constraints and opportunities analysis, (2) Draft SMP amendment, and (3) Public Involvement. Tasks 1 and 2 will yield concrete work products that are informed by the feedback and input received from the public involvement effort (Task 3). Public involvement will engage

stakeholders—both internal and external—to solicit feedback and document attitudes and perceptions about public access needs and improvements.

1.1.1 Engagement Goals and Strategies

The goals and strategies that will guide the public involvement effort are derived from the City's Shoreline Master Program Public Access Chapter 4.6, especially SMP public access policies 1-6 within section 4.6.2, described below:

- **Policy 1.** Continuous public pedestrian access should be provided along the City's shorelines, especially the Columbia River, Rock Cove, and Lower Rock Creek.
- **Policy 2.** The system of public physical and visual access to Stevenson's shorelines should be maintained, enhanced, and protected over time on both private and public lands.
- **Policy 3.** Public access and recreational facilities should be located in a manner that will preserve the natural characteristics and functions of the shoreline.
- **Policy 4.** Private property rights, public safety, and navigational rights should be considered when providing public access opportunities.
- **Policy 5.** New development should identify and preserve key shoreline views and avoid obstructing such views from public areas.
- **Policy 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.

Policy 6 gives clear direction in the SMP's direction towards completing an integrated public access and trail plan along and within shorelines of statewide significance. It is during this planning process through thoughtful engagement of project stakeholders and the public that the City intends to accomplish this planning effort.

1.1.2 Documentation of Public Involvement Effort

For the purpose of documenting community engagement and feedback for support of future funding applications, the following information will be collected throughout the public involvement effort.

Table 1. Summary of Documentation

Subject	Documentation Description	Responsible Party
Extent of outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An inventory of all outreach methods, such as posters, emails, mailings, etc., used to engage the public. • Approximate quantity of public contacts targeted per outreach method, such as number of households. • Extent of geographic area where outreach was conducted. 	City
Event participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participants/respondents, such as completed sign-in sheets from planned events or total of respondents to survey or other engagement exercise. • Summary of feedback received, such as formal responses received or written summary of participant discussion. 	Event facilitator (City or Watershed)

1.2 Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement

The following considerations are provided to assist the City with targeted outreach to key demographics and interest groups.

1.2.1 Stakeholder Identification

1.2.1.1 *Demographics*

According to the Census.gov 2020 American Community Survey, Census Tract 9503, representing the City of Stevenson and a largely undeveloped area several miles to the north hosts a population of 1,898 residents across 824 households, with 792 employed. While stakeholder participation is encouraged broadly by any interested parties, the project team aims to capture feedback that reflects the specific demographics of the greater Stevenson community. Specifically, the following groups should be represented in the feedback received.

- **Working Families with School-Aged Children.** Several statistics captured by the 2020 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census paint a picture of working families with school-aged children as a key demographic in Stevenson. Specifically, roughly one fifth of the population of Stevenson is under the age of 18 (17.1%) and the average persons per household is 2.25. Roughly half the population is in the civilian labor force (53.9%) and an overwhelming majority of persons over age 25 have at least a high school diploma (88.2%). Further, a large number of households have a computer with broadband internet (81.7% and 76%, respectively). Altogether, this suggests that

digital engagement and outreach to schools and workplaces could be effective means of outreach. Further, it suggests that a middle- to high-school reading level would be appropriate for use in outreach and engagement materials.

- Long-term Residents.** According to the U.S. Census data, the vast majority of residents lived in the same house a least 2 years prior to the census date (96.6%), with the largest influx of people moving into this area between 2015 and 2018 (30.9% of total residents). This is supported by the large number of owner-occupied housing units (64.1%), also captured by the Census. The number of long-term residents and owner-occupied housing units both support that direct mailing could be an effective outreach tool.
- Seasonal Residents and Tourists.** According to the U.S. Census data, approximately 15% of all residences within this census tract are vacant, denoting the potential presence of vacation rentals and/or seasonal residents. Further, numerous vacation accommodations (Skamania Lodge, for example) are located near shoreline areas and could benefit greatly from improved public access and increase public recreational amenities. Direct engagement of tourism-related businesses and organizations, such as through direct outreach or mailing, could be an effective means of engagement that could increase support for the trail planning effort.

Table 2. Summary of Demographic Engagement

Demographic Group	Potential Outreach Avenues, Liaisons, and Partners in Outreach
Working families with school-aged children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Elementary, middle, and high schools ○ Parent-Teacher organizations ○ Youth advocacy and engagement organizations ○ Community library and pool
Long-term residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Neighborhood and community organizations ○ Community destinations (e.g., grocery stores, retail centers, parks)
Seasonal Residents and Tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lodging and hotel accommodations ○ Tourism-related businesses ○ Tourism bureaus and advocates ○ Recreational user groups

1.2.1.2 Interest Groups

The following is a list of preliminary stakeholder groups that may represent interests related to public access and trails along the City’s shorelines.

Table 3. Preliminary Summary of Stakeholder Interest Groups

Interest	Potential Stakeholders
Residential property owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shoreline property owners ○ Owners of short-term rentals (e.g., Airbnb, VRBO)
Commercial, industrial, and institutional property owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Business owners and operators ○ Commercial property management companies ○ Lodging and Hotels (Skamania Lodge, for example) ○ Port of Skamania County ○ BNSF regional rail conductor
Community and Recreational Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Skamania County Lions Club ○ Stevenson Eagles Club ○ Columbia Gorge Running Club ○ Skamania County Senior Services
First Nations, Environmental groups and public agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tribes (Cowlitz Tribe, Yakama Nation and Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs) ○ Underwood Conservation District ○ Columbia Land Trust ○ Washington Department of Natural Resources ○ Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force ○ Washington Department of Transportation
Utility providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Skamania PUD
Economic development groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Skamania County Chamber of Commerce
City staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Planning, engineering, and development department staff ○ Parks and recreation department staff ○ Utility department staff ○ Public Works department maintenance staff

1.2.2 Outreach Strategy

The project will rely on the City’s existing network of public outreach and community engagement for project notifications. City staff will be encouraged to share opportunities for public participation through established channels and relationships, such as social media, email lists, community calendars, and other tools. Coordinated content, such as a City email blast,

graphic, or digital handout can be useful in disseminating information consistently. If desired, Watershed can assist the City with reviewing draft content or editing narrative information to engage a public audience.

1.2.2.1 *Stakeholder Meetings*

A series of stakeholder meetings will be held in 2023 through the design development and planning stages. Later in the project cycle, meetings will be held with the Planning Commission and City Council to discuss the draft and final planning documents, including potential code revisions and adoption. An overview of stakeholder meeting sequence and strategy is provided below.

Stakeholder Meeting (1 of 3) – Public Open House

- Attendees and format: Internal and external stakeholders, members of the public, in-person open public meeting
- Discussion: Project overview, including scope, schedule, background, purpose, and next steps of plan adoption and funding
- Watershed will develop exhibits and facilitate exercises designed to capture the following feedback:
 - Broad input from community members on existing conditions, including recreational amenities and assets, experiential assets, constraints and opportunities to inform subsequent planning efforts.
 - Community vision regarding shoreline access and identity.

Stakeholder Meeting (2 of 3) – Stakeholder Charrette

- Attendees and format: City staff and select stakeholders invited to participate in a second working session, invite-only in-person working charrette
- Discussion: Review of key takeaways and highlights from public open house, review and expansion of community vision, distill opportunities and constraints
- Watershed will develop exhibits and facilitate exercises designed to capture the following feedback:
 - Specific concerns and targets for shoreline access improvements.
 - Preliminary identification of key nodes, system gaps, and potential connections.

Stakeholder Meeting (3 of 3) - Public Open House

- Attendees and format: Internal and external stakeholders, members of the public, in-person open public meeting
- Discussion: Project update and progress, review of preliminary plan diagram and concepts, and next steps of plan adoption and funding

- Watershed will develop exhibits and facilitate exercises designed to capture the following feedback:
 - Qualitative feedback on preliminary plan diagram and concepts, including alignments, connections, design standards and recommendations, and proposed facilities.

Watershed will support City staff in preparing and presenting on project progress in support of plan review and adoption. Specifically, Watershed will support the following meetings:

- Planning Commission Virtual Meeting (1 of 2)
- Planning Commission Virtual Meeting (2 of 2)
- City Council Virtual Work Session Meeting (1)

1.2.2.2 *Schedule of Public Engagement*

The following table summarizes the schedule of public engagement consistent with the overall project schedule and target for plan adoption by June 30, 2023.

Table 4. Public Engagement Schedule

Date	Milestone / Notes	Responsible Party
November 2022	○ Draft and finalize Public Engagement Plan (PEP)	Watershed/City
December 2022	○ Finalize date and location of first stakeholder meetings (first public open house and charrette) ○ Publish to city calendar and notify internal stakeholder ○ Send “save-the-date” or meeting invitation	City
January 2023	○ Promote public open house ○ Finalize date and location of second public open house, publish to city calendar, and send “save-the-date”	City
January 2023	○ Prepare draft meeting agenda ○ Prepare meeting materials	Watershed
Late January/ February 2023	○ Facilitate Stakeholder Meetings 1 and 2	Watershed/City
February 2023	○ Promote second public open house	City
February 2023	○ Developing draft plan diagram and concepts ○ Prepare draft meeting agenda ○ Prepare meeting materials	Watershed

Date	Milestone / Notes	Responsible Party
March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitate Stakeholder Meeting 3 	Watershed/City
March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Revise plan diagrams and concepts ○ Advance trail plan report 	Watershed
April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prepare for first Planning Commission Virtual Meeting ○ Attend first Planning Commission Virtual Meeting 	Watershed/City
May 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prepare for second Planning Commission Virtual Meeting ○ Attend second Planning Commission Virtual Meeting ○ Receive recommendation from Planning Commission to forward SMP Amendments to Ecology, final review 	Watershed/City
June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prepare for and attend City Council Virtual Work Session Meeting ○ Deliver final documents for Ordinance and Integrated Shoreline Public Access & Trails Plan 	Watershed/City
Project Completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Final Adoption by City Council 	City

References

Census.gov, Census Tract 9503 (City of Stevenson and Vicinity).

<https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/data-profiles/> Accessed October 2022.

Skamania County Chamber of Commerce. Recreational Fitness Programs.

<https://skamania.org/adult-recreational-fitness-program/#1496978876836-ab450daa-3f91>

Appendix A

STAKEHOLDER MEETING SUMMARIES

Appendix B

STAKEHOLDER MEETING SIGN-IN SHEETS