

10.100 Chapter 1 – Citizen Involvement

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BACKGROUND

Since its inception in 1980, the comprehensive plan has strived to represent the interests of Gresham citizens. Citizen participation is integral to the planning decision making process, including updates to the Comprehensive Plan. A broad collection of officially recognized and supported citizen groups, including council advisory committees and neighborhood associations, advise the City Council, Planning Commission and other City officials on a regular basis. In addition, planning efforts are also informed by a variety of ad-hoc groups and various citizen involvement techniques.

The original comprehensive plan document, called the Community Development Plan, was developed in 1980, with substantial citizen involvement, thorough review and public hearings. For the subsequent 1988 update to the plan, six task forces were organized around major issues: natural/cultural resources; economic development; housing; signs; public facilities; and the Periodic Review Committee, which served as the clearinghouse for recommendations of the other task forces. The 1980 and 1988 planning efforts included broad representation of community interests and geographic areas. A citizen involvement coordinator was hired during the plan’s conception and update in order to facilitate good communication between the City and its citizens.

Not only is citizen involvement critical to City planning efforts, but it also is a required component of the Oregon statewide planning program, as indicated by Statewide Planning Goal 1, Citizen Involvement.

Statewide Planning Goal 1: Citizen Involvement. To develop a citizen involvement program that ensures the opportunity to be involved in all phases of the planning process.

The wording of this goal signifies two important facets of the statewide planning system as it relates to Gresham. First, the vision and needs of local citizens drive the creation of comprehensive planning and related local documents. Second, while the comprehensive plan is required to meet a variety of state rules and standards, it should come from the Gresham community. Local citizen ownership of the Comprehensive Plan is vital to its success.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR ISSUES

The following are some of the major issues that were considered in planning for citizen involvement in Gresham:

Current Citizen Involvement Framework

Since the 1980 and 1988 comprehensive planning efforts, citizen involvement has expanded dramatically in Gresham. Gresham has formed many permanent commissions, citizen committees, and neighborhood associations. The City also coordinates efforts with a number of organizations within the community, the County and the region. For specific planning projects, a variety of techniques are utilized to garner public input, including community forums, stakeholder meetings and surveys.

Gresham has a variety of commissions, committees and task forces that advise on a wide variety of subjects. Some of these groups are called upon to make recommendations on comprehensive planning and Community Development Code issues. The primary organizations that provide advice on planning issues are listed below.

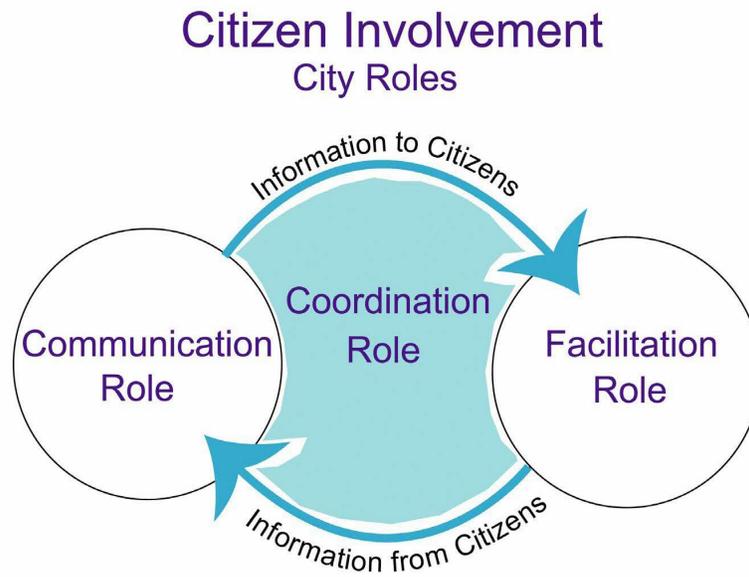
- **Planning Commission.** Central to the development of the Comprehensive Plan is the Planning Commission. This group of appointed community representatives is the “keeper of the plan” and therefore, serves an important citizen involvement function that includes monitoring citizen involvement in land use matters, advising City Council on such matters to ensure citizen involvement in land use matters, encouraging and facilitating public participation in all aspects of the land use planning process by designing a user-friendly process to educate and inform the public about engagement opportunities in the land use arena. The Commission conducts public hearings, advises council on land use issues and makes some land use decisions (*Gresham Revised Code Article 2.20*).
- **Community Development and Housing Citizen Advisory Subcommittee.** The CDHC gathers citizen comments, makes recommendations to the Council and provides leadership in promoting public education and understanding on matters pertaining to community development and housing for low and moderate income persons (*Gresham Revised Code 2.20.070(2)*).
- **Council Transportation Advisory Subcommittee.** This group assists in the development of the Transportation System Plan (TSP) and advises on public involvement for transportation programs (*Gresham Revised Code 2.20.070(3)*).
- **Other Committees.** Periodically land use projects require specialized input from citizens committees, such as the Urban Forestry Subcommittee and the Historic Resources Subcommittee. The Council periodically establishes a temporary advisory committee or task force to assist with a specific project (*Gresham Revised Code Article 2.18*).

- **Neighborhood Associations.** Neighborhood Associations are formally recognized in Gresham in order to facilitate communication with the City. Neighborhood Associations are provided with a variety of opportunities to participate in the planning process. For example, in many instances prospective developers are required to meet with affected Neighborhood Associations to discuss development proposals prior to submitting an application (*Gresham Revised Code Article 2.60*).
- **Citizen Engagement Task Forces.** The Council may establish, by resolution, Citizen Engagement task forces as needed to investigate, evaluate and recommend to Council methods to develop, implement and maintain programs designed to facilitate citizen engagement and the deliberative process by promoting citizen engagement in all aspects of governance (*Gresham Revised Code Article 2.36.005*).

City Roles in Citizen Involvement

The City provides significant opportunity for citizens to be involved in the planning process by fulfilling three inter-related roles depicted in Figure 1.

- **Coordination Role.** The City fulfills its coordination role by providing the structure for citizen involvement to occur, such as establishing advisory committees; codifying citizen involvement rules in various official documents; and providing staff and funding for citizen involvement activities. Without this underlying structure, the back and forth communication to and from citizens could not occur.
- **Communication Role.** The City fulfills the communication role by developing ways to give information to the public on planning issues. The communication method takes a variety of forms, and the City is always looking for creative ways to deliver information more effectively. Some examples include posting notices, creating document summaries, newsletters, holding meetings on topics of interest, using utility bill mailings to inform residents and maintaining a web site on current projects.
- **Facilitation Role.** On the flip side of the communication role is the facilitation role, which allows the City to gather input from the public. This role is manifested in several forms, such as public meetings, community forums, small group meetings and citizen surveys. In addition to citizen input on longer range Comprehensive Plan and Community Development Code updates, the City also works to provide opportunities for citizen input on specific site development proposals.



CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT – GOAL, POLICIES, AND RECOMMENDED ACTION MEASURES

GOAL

The City shall provide opportunities for citizens to participate in all phases of the planning process by coordinating citizen involvement functions; effectively communicating information; and facilitating opportunities for input.

Policies

1. The City shall ensure the opportunity for citizen participation and input when preparing and revising policies, plans and implementing regulations.
2. The City shall consider the interests of the entire community and the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan when making decisions.
3. The City shall foster regular and ongoing two-way communication between citizens and City elected and appointed officials.
4. The City shall provide opportunities for meaningful citizen involvement on site development proposals.
5. The City shall keep citizens informed of issues confronting the City.
6. The City shall ensure that technical information necessary to make policy decisions is readily available.
7. The City shall facilitate involvement of citizens in the planning process, including data collection, plan preparation, adoption, implementation, evaluation and revision.

8. The City shall ensure that citizen concerns are considered in land use decisions and shall provide feedback to the public regarding how these concerns have impacted decisions.
9. The City shall ensure that citizen involvement plans and activities incorporate Gresham's diverse constituencies regardless of age, sex, religion, social or business affiliation.
10. The City shall ensure the opportunity for the public to be involved in all phases of planning projects and issues.
11. The City shall ensure that the public has complete and timely access to all public information concerning land use projects and issues. This includes private development proposals once they are in the formal application process.

Action Measures

Coordination Role

1. Establish council advisory groups and ad-hoc committees to advise staff, the Planning Commission, and City Council regarding land use issues by:
 - a. Designating the Planning Commission as the advisory group that will assist in developing and implementing a program to promote and enhance citizen involvement in land use planning.
Establishing Citizen Engagement Task Forces on an as needed basis.
 - b. Providing City staff to help with committees and citizen involvement activities, including a Citizen Involvement Coordinator position.
 - c. Forming specific advisory committees to provide input into land use topics.
 - d. Evaluating the citizen involvement program on a bi-annual basis.
2. Ensure that the input, information, factual contributions and expertise provided by citizens is considered when making decisions about land use issues by:
 - a. Accurately relaying pre-hearing public comment and other information to the Planning Commission, and
 - b. Reflecting public testimony in a relevant hearing record and findings.
3. Facilitate the formation of neighborhood associations and allow representatives to provide official recommendations to the City Council, Planning Commission and the City Manager on matters affecting the livability of the neighborhood.

Communication Role

4. Keep the public informed of opportunities for involvement in all phases of land use planning issues by:

- a. Providing adequate notice for all citizen involvement activities. This includes contact with citizens:
 - i. As early as possible of pending land use actions, and
 - ii. Throughout the land use processes including informational meetings, work sessions, and public hearings.
 - b. Keeping the public informed of opportunities for involvement in land use planning using a range of available media including the Internet, newspaper notices, mailings, newsletters, television and meetings. The special needs of Gresham's diverse citizenry (i.e., language, literacy skills) shall be considered.
 - c. Providing timely and accurate follow-up to citizen inquires and requests for information.
5. Providing citizens timely access to all public information related to land use matters under consideration by:
 - a. Ensuring that planning information is available at City Hall,
 - b. Making available copies of all technical information, planning documents and staff reports through the Urban Design and Planning Department and other locations, as appropriate, and
 - c. Having UDP staff available to interpret information and provide consultation to citizens.
6. Communicate information clearly and effectively by:
 - a. Producing summaries of important documents that are long or complex.
 - b. Producing informational documents describing City processes.
 - c. Making documents such as the Comprehensive Plan and Community Development Code readily available.
 - d. Maintaining current information on electronic information systems and using these mediums to solicit public input.
 - e. Translating, when appropriate, summary minutes, flyers or other information into languages prominent in Gresham.
7. Engage in outreach activities to inform and encourage public involvement by:
 - a. Providing a Speakers Bureau consisting of planners, local officials or others willing to speak to neighborhood associations, civic clubs and classes about planning and related issues.
 - b. Holding community meeting in areas where development activity or other circumstances have resulted in public interest and concern.
 - c. Considering times, days and locations to maximize potential public participation.

Facilitation Role

8. Facilitate citizen input into the process for revising local land use plans and ordinances by:
 - a. Ensuring that the public has the opportunity to participate in the formulation of plan policies and review of measures to implement local planning objectives.
 - b. Ensuring that the public has the opportunity to review and comment on proposed changes to the Gresham Comprehensive Plan and Community Development Code prior to public hearings on the proposed plan amendments.
 - c. Utilizing existing advisory committees to review and make recommendations on revisions to the Comprehensive Plan and Community Development Code, which are intended to change the meaning or purpose of goals, policies or regulation.
 - d. Appointing special purpose advisory bodies to aid in the development and implementation of Comprehensive Plan and Community Development Code elements.
 - e. Providing information about what public input has been made during the planning process. Include this detail in meeting minutes, staff reports, planning documents and other publications. Create reports that provide information on public input from open houses and community forums.
9. Make public participation processes user-friendly by:
 - a. Holding widely advertised public hearings in accessible meeting rooms,
 - b. Providing public comment periods at all public meetings to allow citizens to speak on topics not necessarily on the agenda,
 - c. Publicizing comments, ideas and recommendations obtained at community meetings and through the planning process, and
 - d. Considering times, days, and locations to maximize potential public participation.
10. Encourage broadly based public participation including all geographic area and diverse interests by:
 - a. Emphasizing open communication between developers and neighbors about compatibility issues,
 - b. Seeking citizen input through service organizations, interest groups and individuals, as well as through neighborhood associations, and
 - c. Ensuring prospective developers comply with City requirements for early neighborhood involvement with affected neighborhoods.
11. When appropriate, provide culturally sensitive participation opportunities, which may include language translation and interpretation.

(Amended by Ordinance No. 1592 passed 9/7/04; effective 10/7/04)

(Amended by Ordinance No. 1779 passed 01/02/18; effective 02/01/18)