

ONALASKA SUBAREA PLAN

Public Engagement Plan

Public Review Draft
June 2023



How to Comment

You may submit comments to the Lewis County Community Development staff on the Onalaska Subarea Plan by:

Email

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U.S. Mail

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Attention: Mindy Brooks

For more information

Visit the website

<https://lewiscountywa.gov/departments/community-development/rezones/comprehensive-plan-and-development-regulation-amendments/onalaska-subarea-plan/>



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lewis County is partnering with the community of Onalaska to develop a subarea plan. A subarea plan is a road map that guides how a specific geography, like Onalaska, will grow and develop over the next 20 years. The plan will include a vision for Onalaska, as well as goals and policies on issues ranging from transportation to housing to recreation.

The subarea plan is created by the Onalaska community in partnership with staff. The Public Engagement Plan explains the approach and tools that will be used to empower members of the community to be engaged in planning for the future.

Onalaska Subarea Plan Timeline

2023			2024			2025
Spring Project Kick Off	Summer Existing Conditions	Fall Community Vision	Winter Goals & Policies	Spring Next Steps	Summer Final Plan	Implementation

The process will be guided by a Community Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC membership should represent the diversity of geography, residents, businesses, visitors and interest in Onalaska. The CAC will be formed in June 2023 and will meet monthly over the 12-month project timeline. Members will be asked to bring community viewpoints to the discussion and collaborate with staff to reach consensus on the vision, goals and policies.

Everyone in Onalaska is encouraged to participate in the planning process. Below is a list of tools that will be used to solicit input.

- **Website** – A new webpage will be dedicated to the Onalaska Subarea Plan and all materials will be posted for public review.
- **Events Calendar** – Upcoming meetings dates, times and locations will be posted online.
- **Email** – An email list of interested person will be created and periodic project updates will be sent, including links to online surveys and the calendar.
- **Social Media/Newspaper** – Information about the project and ways to participate will be shared via existing social media platforms and the local newspaper.
- **Surveys** – Surveys will be used to gather input from a wide range of people. Links to the surveys will be posted on the webpage and provided via email.
- **Community Meetings** - Staff will attend existing community meetings to provide information and will host project-specific community meetings to collaborate with the public on developing the vision, goals and policies.

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

Public engagement in the planning process is a main tenant of the Washington State Growth Management Act. Developing an effective public engagement plan is critical to giving members of the community the opportunity to become directly involved in local democracy and influence how their town grows and changes over time.

A. What is Public Engagement

Public engagement is a process to ensure that community members and interested parties have a meaningful role in the discussions, deliberations, decision-making and implementation of projects affecting them and their community. Leaders, including the government, have a responsibly to engage and empower the community throughout the planning process.

Public engagement takes many forms and can be viewed as a spectrum ranging from informing the community about projects or plans, to fully collaborating with the community to develop the project or plan (Figure 1). As the planning process for Onalaska takes place, each community member is encouraged to self-select the level of involvement they would like to have.

Figure 1: Public Engagement Spectrum



B. Public Engagement Principles

The principles, below, represent a framework to guide Lewis County Community Development staff in establishing consistent, effective and high-quality public engagement.

Partnership: Community members have a right to be involved in decisions that affect them. Participants can influence decision-making and receive feedback on how their input was used. The public can recommend issues for government consideration.

Early Involvement: Public involvement is an early and integral part of issue and opportunity identification, concept development, design, and implementation of visions, goals, policies, and programs.

Building Relationships and Community Capacity: Public engagement processes invests in and develops long-term, collaborative working relationships and learning opportunities with community partners and stakeholders.

Inclusiveness and Equity: Public dialogue and decision-making processes identify, reach out to, and encourage participation of the community in its full diversity. Processes respect a range of values and interests and the knowledge of those involved. Historically excluded individuals and groups are included authentically in processes, activities, and decision- and policy-making. Impacts, including costs and benefits, are identified and distributed fairly.

Good Quality Process Design and Implementation: Public engagement processes and techniques are well-designed to appropriately fit the scope, character, and impact of a policy or program. Processes adapt to changing needs and issues as they move forward.

Transparency: Public decision-making processes are accessible, open, honest, and understandable. Members of the public receive the information they need and with enough lead time to participate effectively.

Accountability: County leaders and staff are accountable for ensuring meaningful public engagement in the work of county government.

C. Why is Public Engagement Important

Public engagement increases the visibility and understanding of issues and empowers people to collaborate on decisions that affect their lives, neighborhood and town. There are many benefits of effective public engagement:

- Builds cohesive communities
- Leads to better outcomes
- Drives social transformation
- Promotes sustainable results
- Provides access to decision makers

D. Public Engagement Process

The goal of public engagement for this planning process is to collaborate with the community to develop a shared 20-year vision for Onalaska and identify the goals and policies that will support that vision. The process will occur over a 12-month period beginning in June 2023 and culminating in summer 2024. However, the subarea plan is not the end; it is the road map to carry forward the vision through continued community involvement and actions. An intended result of the process is community ownership of the plan and feeling empowered to implement the plan.

Below is a general schedule for the Onalaska Subarea Plan. As described in the next chapters, public engagement will occur at every step and will take many forms so the public can choose how they would like to participate.

Table 1: Onalaska Subarea Plan General Schedule

2023			2024			2025
Spring Project Kick Off	Summer Existing Conditions	Fall Community Vision	Winter Goals & Policies	Spring Next Steps	Summer Final Plan	Implementation

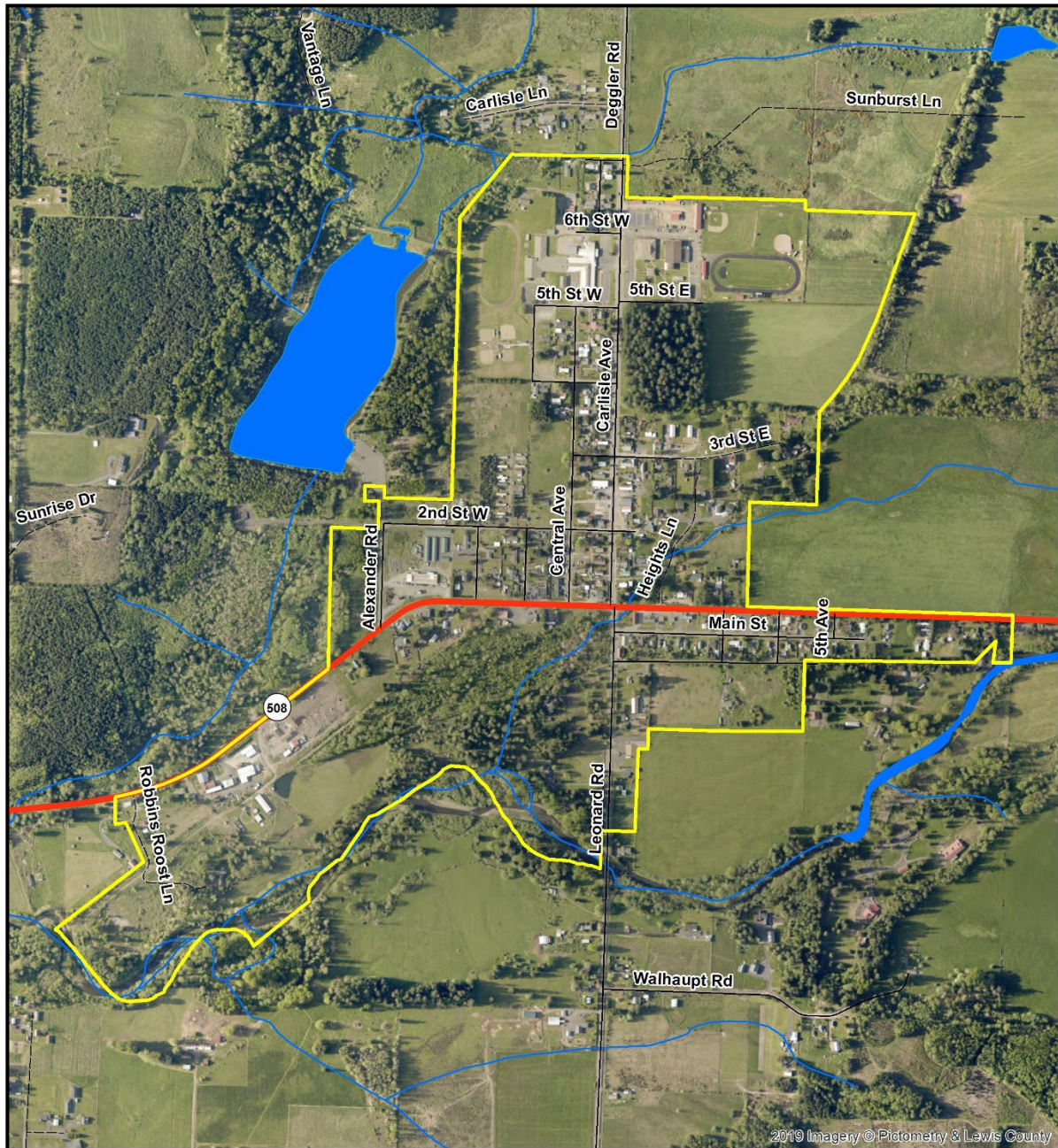
While the public is encouraged to participate throughout process, there are key roles in decision making that will lead to the final subarea plan:

1. Community Advisory Committee – This committee, which is described in more detail in Chapter 2, will collaborate on producing the plan and will provide advice to the Planning Commission.
2. Planning Commission – The Planning Commission is an appointed group that makes formal recommendations to the Board of County Commissioner on long range planning actions. Planning Commission will have workshops throughout the planning process. There will be at least one public hearing for the Planning Commission to receive public testimony on the draft subarea plan.
3. Board of County Commissioners – The Board of County Commissioner (BOCC) is the elected decision-making body who, upon the recommendation of the Planning Commission, votes to adopt the subarea plan. The BOCC will hold at least one public hearing to receive public testimony on the draft subarea plan.

Information about the Lewis County Planning Commission is available online at <https://lewiscountywa.gov/departments/community-development/rezones/lewis-county-planning-commission/>

Information about the Lewis County Board of County Commissioners is available online at <https://lewiscountywa.gov/offices/commissioners/>

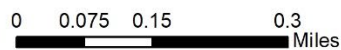
Map 1: Onalaska Subarea Plan Study Area



- Onalaska Subarea Plan**
- Onalaska Subarea Boundary
 - SR 508
 - Roads
 - Parcels
 - Waterbodies

Updated 5/04/2023

Planning Division, Community Development



This map was created by Lewis County Geographic Information System. The accuracy of the map has not been verified and should be used for informational purposes only. Any possible discrepancies should be brought to the attention of Lewis County GIS.
 State Plane Washington South FIPS 4602
 North American Datum 1983
 North American Vertical Datum 1988 (Topography)

Chapter 2: Stakeholders

Any plan that creates policies or changes development regulations will have a direct impact on people in the community. These people are called “stakeholders” because they have a stake in the outcome of the plan. It would be wonderful if the outcome benefitted all stakeholders, but in reality, any choice made will have positive and negative impacts on different individuals. Part of the planning process is uncovering who benefits and who is burdened by decisions made in the plan.

A. Equitable Engagement

Equitable engagement means that the process is designed to ensure that those most impacted from decisions have an opportunity meaningfully participate and influence the outcomes. Equitable engagement also means that all groups of people shall be heard during the process and no group shall bear a disproportionate share of the negative consequences resulting from decisions made. Lewis County Community Development staff are committed to non-discriminatory public participation and will engage with all community members, including but not limited to low-income, women, minorities, people with disabilities, people with Limited English Proficiency, seniors and youth populations during the Onalaska Subarea Plan process and decision-making.

B. Community Stakeholders

Below is a list of the types of community stakeholders in Onalaska. Some individuals may fall within more than one group – you may be a homeowner, an employee, and a member of a church. There is no hierarchy to the list; every stakeholder is equally important, and their voice needs to be included in the process.

Staff will work with each group to identify potential positive and negative impacts of different choices, as well as mitigation measures to reduce negative impacts. It is incumbent on staff to make sure marginalized voices have an opportunity to clearly state potential impacts without fear of retribution.

This list is not exhaustive and for that reason it will be continuously updated during the planning process. Groups added will receive special consideration to make sure they are empowered to participate, even if coming to the table later in the process.

Onalaska Community Stakeholders:

- Full Time Resident
- Part Time Resident
- Homeowner
- Long Term Renter
- Short Term Renter
- Business Owner
- Employee
- Developer
- Tribes
- People of Color
- People with Limited English Proficiency
- Communities with Disabilities
- Senior
- Youth
- Churches
- Schools
- Library
- Fire Department
- Police Department
- Water/Sewer Districts
- Tourists

**Updated June 2023

C. Community Advisory Committee

A Community Advisory Committee (CAC) will be formed to guide the subarea planning process, with the goal of having at least one person from each stakeholder group included on the CAC. A single person on the CAC might represent more than one stakeholder group.

The members should be diverse in composition, geography and interests and represent the community as a whole. Members should be “big thinkers” willing to collaborate as a group. Members should be interested engaging with the community at-large and fostering strong, long-term relationships. The CAC will meet monthly throughout the planning process and is charged with:

- discussing the process and steps
- developing the vision(s), policies and goals based on broader public input
- identifying benefits and burdens on stakeholders
- reviewing and providing comments on materials
- attending events to keep the public up to date
- providing advice to the Planning Commission

Serving on the CAC is a large commitment, but it is also the most influential role in this Public Engagement Plan.

During June 2023, staff and the Planning Commission will identify people who might like to serve on the CAC. The CAC does not have a minimum or maximum number of participants; however ideally there will be between 10 – 20 members. It is also important that there is a balance between interests. Staff will work hard to create a CAC that is diverse in composition and adequately represents the broad community.

Chapter 3: ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

A. Desired Outcomes of Engagement

In order to develop an effective strategy for public engagement, the desired outcomes must first be understood.

The Onalaska Subarea Plan desired outcomes for public engagement include the following:

- Be transparent throughout all phases of the planning process.
- Include diverse perspectives.
- Promote civil/civic conversation to seek common ground whenever possible.
- Provide multiple and meaningful ways to participated including interactive meeting formats, web-based educational materials, and focused group discussions.
- Strengthen community understanding of planning terms and processes.
- Develop long term relationships that will help implement the plan.

B. Engagement Strategies

Each step in the planning process is addressed below, including the types of Engagement and tools that will be used. The tools are further described in section C.

1. Project Kick Off

The goal of the project kick off is to let as many community stakeholders know about the project as possible and make sure they understand how and when they can participate. Kick off will occur in June-July 2023.

Collaborate – The CAC will be formed during project kick off.

Involve – Staff will host a community meeting to provide information about the subarea planning process, to answer questions and to encourage people to consider participating on the Community Advisory Committee or sign up for email updates. Staff will create a survey to gather initial community thoughts about Onalaska’s future. The survey will be shared via email and social media and hardcopies will be distributed at the community meeting.

Inform – A website will be created online that will house information about the project. Social media platforms will be identified and information about the subarea plan process will be pushed out on social media as well as shared with the local newspapers.

<https://lewiscountywa.gov/departments/community-development/rezones/comprehensive-plan-and-development-regulation-amendments/>

2. Existing Conditions Report

The goal of the existing conditions report is to provide a factual basis from which the subarea plan is created. The report will be technical and data driven. It will cover a range of topics for current population, existing public services and facilities (e.g., sewer, water, transportation, schools), existing community amenities (e.g., parks, community centers, churches) and natural resource considerations (e.g., wetlands, flood area). Existing conditions will be gathered into a report in summer 2023 and shared with the public in fall 2023.

Collaborate – The CAC will be invited to review an early draft and provide technical information for inclusion.

Involve – The public will be invited via email and social media to review and comment on the report.

Inform – The draft Existing Conditions Report will be posted on the project website and a link sent via email and social media.

3. Community Visioning

The goal of community visioning is to develop a 20-year vision for Onalaska. The vision, or visions, should be comprehensive, forward thinking and represent the varied interests in the community. Visioning will take place between July-September 2023.

Collaborate – The CAC will help draft optional vision statement(s) and will use the community input to create the final vision(s).

Involve – The community will be asked to review and comment on the draft vision statement(s).

Inform – Information about the visioning process will be posted online and sent to the community via email and social media. The final visions(s) will be presented to the Planning Commission for discussion.

4. Community Goals and Policies

The goal of this step is to guide the community in developing goals and policies that will meet the community 20-year vision for Onalaska. This process requires significant public engagement and therefore most of the effort is dedicated to this step. The schedule is October 2023 – March 2024.

Collaborate – The CAC will develop and hone the goals and policies.

Involve – A survey will be created to allow the public to comment on draft goals and policies.

Inform – Information about how to be involved in developing the goals and policies will be posted online, sent via email and social media and fliers will be placed around town. Once draft goals and policies are produced, they will be posted as well. Staff will attend existing community meetings to share information about the draft goals and policies.

5. Next Steps/Action Plan

This step is not defined yet and depends largely on the outcomes of steps 2 – 5. The CAC will help staff to determine public engagement for this step. This will occur April-May 2024.

6. Adoption

In the Summer 2024 a final draft Onalaska Subarea Plan will be compiled and will be the subject of a Planning Commission workshop and public hearing. The Planning Commission can chose to recommend the plan to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) for adoption.

Collaborate – *(If collaboration is done effectively at the previous steps, the final draft should be an accumulation of the results.)*

Involve – The CAC will be asked to submit a letter* to Planning Commission and the CAC will be invited to provide opening statements at the workshop. Staff will attend existing community meetings to share the final draft Onalaska Subarea Plan and encourage people to provide comments to the Planning Commission and BOCC.

*The CAC will develop this letter without the aid of staff to ensure it is honest and reflects the CAC’s opinions about the process and outcome. There may not be consensus within CAC. If that occurs, there may be two separate letters or there may be one letter that contains different opinions.

Inform – The final draft Onalaska Subarea Plan will be posted online, links sent via email and social media and a limited copies will be distributed around town. Information about the Planning Commission meetings will also be posted. A press release will be sent to the local newspapers in advance of the meetings. The public hearings, both at Planning Commission and BOCC, will be legally noticed in the local newspapers and sent via email and social media.

7. Implementation

Following completion of the Onalaska Subarea Plan, Lewis County Community Development will immediately begin creating zoning and development regulations to implement the plan. This work will be done in collaboration with community; however, a separate Public Engagement Plan will be produced for that phase of the project.

The zoning and development regulations that implement the plan must be adopted with the periodic update of the Lewis County Comprehensive Plan by June 30, 2025.

Chapter 4: ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

The strategy described in Chapter 4 identifies many tools that will be used during the planning process. Each tool is described below.

Website

A new webpage has been created on the Lewis County Community Development's website <https://lewiscountywa.gov/departments/community-development/rezones/comprehensive-plan-and-development-regulation-amendments/>. The webpage will be dedicated to the Onalaska Subarea Plan. Documents, engagement materials and other information will be posted on the webpage. Events will be posted on the Community Development Calendar <https://lewiscountywa.gov/departments/community-development/events/>. All materials and notices will provide direct links to the webpage.

Email

An email list of interested persons will be created for the Onalaska Subarea Plan. Any member of the public can request to be added to the list. Emails will be sent periodically to inform people about the project and ways to participate in the process. Personal email addresses will be kept confidential and will only be used for this project. A link to sign up for the email list can be found on the webpage.

Social Media

There will not be an Onalaska Subarea Plan social media platform hosted by Lewis County. Staff will push information out on to existing platforms within the community including but not limited to:

- Onalaska, WA Community Forum
- Onalaska Washington Neighborhood Watch
- Onalaska Homesteading/Self Sufficiency
- Toledo/Winlock/Napavine/Mossyrock/Morton/Onalaska/Cinnebar , community
- East Lewis County News

The community may identify other social media platforms that staff should consider posting information to during the course of the project.

Surveys

Surveys will be a primary tools in obtaining input from the community. Surveys will be online and hosted by Lewis County. Each survey will be simple and easy to use. Links to surveys will be posted on the webpage and provided via email and social media.

Because not everyone has access to the internet or to a computer, hard copies of the surveys will be made available. Staff will distribute copies at community meetings and will ask local businesses if copies can be made available. Hard copies will need to be mailed in or physically returned to staff; information about return options will be provided on the individual surveys.

Community Meetings

Existing

Staff will attend existing community meetings to provide information and get input from the public. Existing meetings are an effective tool to inform the public because people already plan to attend these meetings and do not have to make special arrangements. Staff is available to attend community meetings upon request, including homeowner association meetings, neighborhood meetings, etc. Staff may identify other ongoing meetings to attend.

Hosted

Staff plan on hosting community meetings to collaborate with the public on developing goals and policies for Onalaska. Staff will work with the CAC to determine the most effective types of community meetings, which may include:

- **Open house events** – Approximately three open house events may be held, each on a subset of topics, where the public can attend to learn about project and provide input on goals and policies. Open house events do not have a set agenda or presentation. Instead they include staffed stations that people can participate in.
- **Workshops** – Workshops may be held throughout the project. At a workshop, the public engages in focused small group discussion on specific topics and the information is reported out to the large group. Participants have the opportunity to participate more than one small group discussion, as well as the larger group summary at the end.
- **Focus groups** – A focus group meets on a single topic and staff facilitate the discussion based on a set of questions or prompts. These are small groups of interested people. The results are shared with the CAC.
- **Interviews** – Interviews are one-on-one discussions between staff and individuals based on a set of questions or prompts. The results are shared with the CAC.

Newspapers

Staff will engage with The Chronicle to provide information about the project and ways people can participate in the process. At a minimum, an initial press release will be made to kick off the project, press releases announcing public hearings and a final press release will be made when the subarea plan draft is complete and legal notices of public hearings will be published. Staff hope additional articles will be written during the process. The media is invited to attend community meetings, with the exception of focus groups and interviews.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission will hold workshops throughout the process. Workshops are informational and the public is invited to watch and provide comments. Comments can be provided at the end each meeting, and each person is given (3) minutes to address the commissioners.

At the end of the project, Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the final Onalaska Subarea Plan. The hearing is noticed in the local newspaper and via email and social media. The public can provide written testimony before the hearing and oral testimony at the hearing; each person is given (3) minutes.

Planning Commission meetings are the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 6:00pm. The meetings are held at the Lewis County Historic Courthouse and via Zoom. More information about upcoming meetings, agendas and the Zoom link are available through the Community Development Calendar <https://lewiscountywa.gov/departments/community-development/events/>

Staff Contact

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