

Lewis County Packwood Sewer System Project

Public Engagement Plan

July 26, 2023



Lewis County Department of Public Works

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How to Comment

You may submit comments to the Packwood Sewer System Project by:

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For more information

Visit the website:

<https://lewiscountywa.gov/departments/public-works/current-projects/packwood-sewer-project/>



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lewis County is proposing the Packwood Sewer System Project (the Project) to replace septic systems in the downtown Packwood area.

Lewis County has obtained funds for use in the design and construction of a new Large On-Site Sewage System (LOSS) in the community of Packwood, Washington, in unincorporated eastern Lewis County.

The collection system will extend north along State Route (SR 12) from approximately the northern boundary of the old mill property to the SR 12 / Skate Cr.-Snyder Rd. intersection. The system will include the installation of 400 linear feet of sanitary sewer pipe on Tahoma St. E., 745 linear feet on Main St. W., 570 linear feet on Main St. E., and 440 linear feet along Willame St. E. This project will also include the possible installation of two (2) lift stations, and 4,465 linear feet of pipe from SR 12 to the sewage treatment and disposal facility.

The County has retained the services of consulting engineering firm, HDR Engineering, Inc., to assist with the project's design. Design elements associated with the project will consist of plan development, including identifying and addressing environmental and cultural resource impacts, implementing a vigorous community engagement process for obtaining vital feedback from the public as the project progresses, and finalizing plans, contract specifications, and engineer's estimate of probable construction costs to support the construction of the project.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed Project is to provide a sewer system for the downtown business corridor and surrounding area to enable a vibrant downtown area that can serve the Packwood Community and their visitors. It has been noted by business owners that it is currently difficult for a business to be able to operate without a sewer system as the requirements for a septic system are so land intensive.

All existing development in Packwood is currently served by private onsite septic systems. Most of the systems are conventional gravity flow septic tanks and drain fields. Many inadequate septic systems in the Packwood community pose a health threat to the aquifer that provide domestic water for the area. Bacteria, virus, and nitrate contaminants from these systems can cause serious health problems. Most of the soils in the area are classified as "Type 1, gravelly, very gravelly, coarse sands, and extremely gravelly soil," which result in high levels of permeability. Since this type of soil is so permeable it provides a minimal amount of soil treatment to downtown Packwood, thus a large amount of wastewater is discharged to the ground over a small area. Many of the existing onsite systems in the downtown core were installed before 1991, when Lewis County Public Health and Social Services, Environmental Health Division, began to specify that these highly permeable soils fail to provide adequate treatment of sewage effluent prior to discharge to the groundwater.

The lack of adequate space or resources for onsite sewage disposal systems has resulted in businesses being unable to expand or open. Also, current health regulations make it difficult

for many of the residential units to replace failing septic systems on existing small lot configurations. For those situations, a homeowner would have to purchase additional land to expand their current lot size to meet health regulations, which is unrealistic or cost prohibitive in most circumstances.

In August 2022, Lewis County Public Works was provided an appropriation by the Washington State Legislature for design and construction of a public sewer system that will serve a portion of the Packwood Subarea although the exact service area was undecided at the time of plan adoption. It is anticipated that construction of the municipal sewer treatment system will be completed in 2026 and will be operated by the Lewis County Water Services District 3 (LCWSD3).

Although the recent new businesses opening in Packwood are promising signs of the community's growth — many residents see challenges to further development unless Packwood can connect to the proposed sewer infrastructure that's been discussed for over a decade in the area.

Many feel that the squeeze has hampered business in downtown Packwood. There's little land left available for prospective business owners to put in septic systems, and the lack of sewer puts limitations on businesses with no septic connection. It has been noted that the lack of infrastructure has prevented any water intensive businesses such as laundromats or car washes from opening in town due to these constraints.

With these concerns in mind, the Lewis County Economic Development Council asked the Legislature for \$5 million to fund construction of a sewer system in Packwood.

There's not enough septic capacity," said EDC executive director Matt Matayoshi. "For new development, it makes it challenging. We're just talking about taking care of what's existing and making an opportunity for growth."

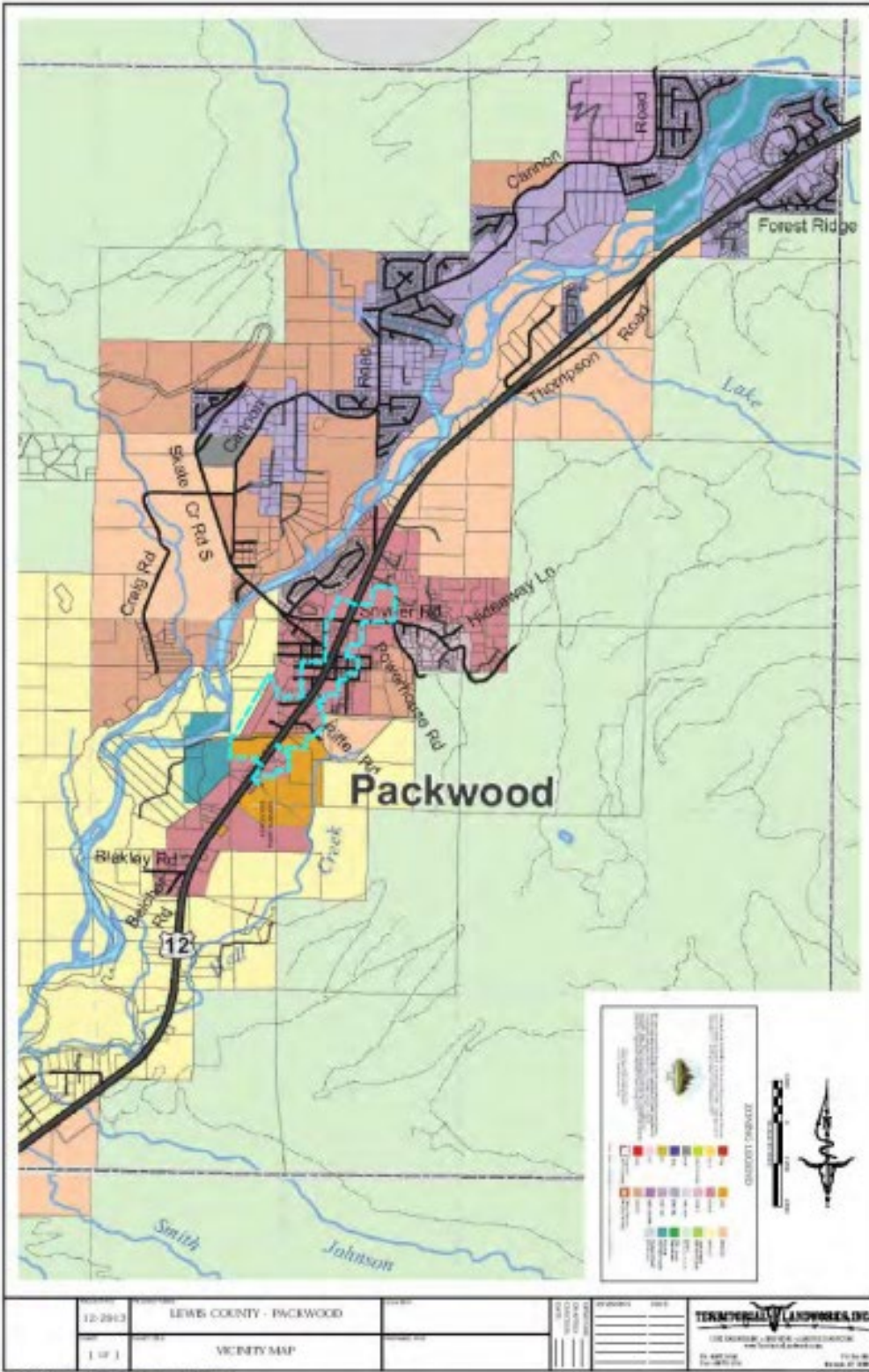
Matayoshi noted that some businesses in Packwood rely on portable restrooms outside — not ideal in a community that lives on travel and tourism. "It's as simple as being able to use the bathroom," he said.

Currently some restaurants must limit their capacity to meet the infrastructure restrictions, and some use disposable dishes because they can't have dishwashers.

The options for new businesses would be dramatically improved with the development of a sewer system to service the area. With a conversion to a sewer system the empty buildings would be able to be filled with new tenants/ businesses as well the community would have the infrastructure capacity for new businesses construction.

A sewer system won't just be good for business but also for the people who work seasonal jobs nearby at Mount Rainier National Park or the White Pass Ski Area, as Packwood currently lacks the affordable housing to accommodate them. Sewers in the downtown area would allow the construction of some multi-family housing apartments, which would help reduce the housing supply issue.

Map 1: Draft Packwood Sewer Vicinity Map, 2013 Study



Source: Draft Packwood Subarea Plan, December 2022.

The County pursued and received a State grant in 2022 to cover part of the design and construction costs.

The sewer service would allow land currently occupied by septic systems and drain fields to be used for new businesses. It would also allow “larger water use industries” to set up shop in town. Meanwhile, it could replace aging septic systems that pollute groundwater and the nearby Cowlitz River.

The community has been exploring the possibility of sewer for close to 20 years, saying that downtown has been “stagnant” because of the infrastructure limitations.

There are concerns that with only a small base paying into the system, it will need to be an affordable system. While Water-Sewer District 3 is not directly involved in efforts to get the sewer system built, the district has agreed to assume responsibility for operations if it is constructed.

The proposed sewer system would serve the areas within Packwood’s zoned Limited Area of More Intensive Rural Development — essentially the downtown business core — and not the surrounding residential community.

Objective of Public Participation Plan

The Public Engagement Plan explains the approach and tools that will be used to empower members of the community to be engaged in this project. This Plan includes identifying stakeholders and the level of engagement for each stakeholder group, determining tools and mechanisms for soliciting input from stakeholders and the general public, and establishing meeting and event schedules.

The Engagement Process assumes three public meetings: a kick-off briefing at 30 percent design and two additional meetings during the remainder of the design process, with commitment to use the results of engagement to refine the design. In addition to the public meetings, specific meetings will be held with key property owners as needed. The County is to provide an initial email list for use in communications with the Community. An individual can request to be added to the email list by contacting:

Mark Burch, Special Projects Manager
Lewis County Public Works
(360) 740 -2650 Mark.burch@lewiscountywa.gov

The Community Open Houses will include a presentation on the Project, current updates, and a Fact sheet handed out at the events as supporting material.

Each meeting will be summarized by posting a short description of the meeting, a copy of handouts and additional FAQ from the meeting will be added the master FAQ on the webpage and included in the final summary if required by the funding agency.

Figure 1: Project Timeline-2023-2026

2023				2024	2025-2026
Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall		
Existing Conditions/ Design	Survey/ Cultural Resources / Begin Design	SEPA Submittal / Permit Begins	Design Refinements Continue	Final Design /Permitting	Construction

Source: Data points from Packwood Sewer System project schedule as of 4/2023

The process will be guided by the County Public Works Leadership and Public Outreach Best Practices.

Every interested party is encouraged to participate in the public engagement process. Below is a list of tools that will be used to solicit input.

- **Website** – The County has a webpage dedicated to the Packwood Sewer System Project and materials including FAQ’s will be posted for public review.
- **Events Calendar** – Upcoming meetings dates, times and locations will be posted online.
- **Email** – An email list of interested people 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 Lewis County Public Works social media platforms and the local newspaper.
- **Council Meetings** – Staff will brief the County Council on on-going public outreach activities during the Pre-Construction and Project Implementation Process.
- **Community Meetings** - Staff will attend existing community meetings to provide information and will host project-specific community meetings to gather public feedback on the project.

Accommodation, including Interpretation at Meetings can be requested at least 7 days prior to the meeting by submitting requests to the County. Last minute requests will be accepted but may not be possible to fill.

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

A. What is Public Engagement?

Public engagement/ participation / outreach 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 responsibility 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 this Project takes place, each community member is encouraged to self-select the level of involvement they would like to have.

Figure 2: Public Participation Spectrum



B. Public Engagement Principles

The principles below represent a framework to guide County staff in establishing consistent, effective, and high-quality community 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 engagement is an early and integral part of issue and opportunity identification, concept development, design, and implementation projects.

Building Relationships and Community Capacity: Public engagement processes invest in and develop 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, program, or project. 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 involvement in the work of County activities.

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 community. There are many benefits of effective public participation:

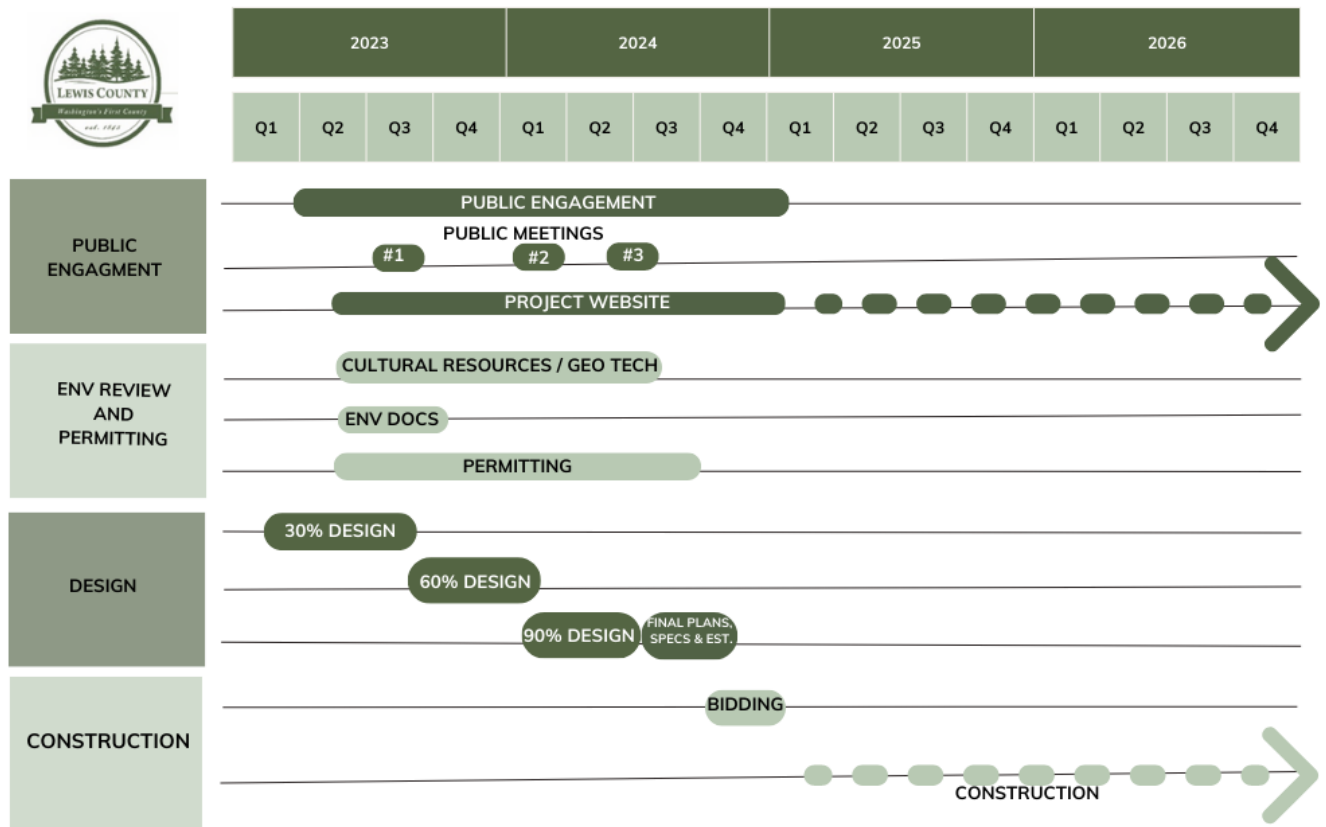
- Builds cohesive communities
- Leads to better outcomes
- Drives social transformation
- Promotes sustainable results
- Provides access to decision makers

D. Public Engagement Process

The goal of public engagement for this planning process is to collaborate with the community in the development of the Packwood Sewer System project.

Below is a general schedule for the Project. 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: Packwood Sewer System Project General Schedule



Source: HDR, April 2023

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

County Board of Commissioners – The County Board of Commissioners is the elected decision-making body who, upon the recommendation of the County Staff, votes to approve Annual Budgets, Capital Plans, Contracts, and policies related to County assets.

It anticipated that there will be the first of three hosted meetings in early fall 2023 to present the public with the preferred alternatives, the process, and the updated Project Schedule.

In the meeting, the public will be offered an opportunity to submit comments about any aspect of the Project or process.

Map 2: Packwood Sewer System Project Area



Source: Lewis County Public Works, March 2023

Chapter 2: Stakeholders

Any plan that creates a project, 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. Under federal and state guidance, the goal is to not adversely affect any stakeholder. But any choice made during the development of this project may have positive or negative impacts on different individuals. Part of the planning process is uncovering who benefits and who is burdened by decisions made in the plan and if mitigation opportunities that can be developed to minimize any negative impacts.

A. Equitable Engagement

Equitable engagement means that the process is designed to ensure that those most impacted from decisions have an opportunity to 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. Aberdeen and Hoquiam County staff and leadership are committed to non-discriminatory public participation and will engage with all community members, including low-income, women, minorities, people with disabilities, people with Limited English Proficiency, seniors and youth populations during the planning process and decision-making.

B. Community Stakeholders

Below is a list of the types of community stakeholders in the Packwood Project Area. Some individuals may fall within more than one group. 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.

Stakeholders:

- Homeowners
- Renters
- Business Owners
- Employees (may live outside of project limits)
- Local Governments
- State and Federal Agencies
- Developers
- People of Color
- Low income
- Unemployed
- People with Limited English Proficiency
- Communities with Disabilities
- Fire Services
- Police Services
- Water/Sewer Districts

C. Tribal Consultations

The County will follow best practices for Section 106 Formal Consultation and plans to exceed the State and Federal requirements with additional informal discussions to ensure the Project aligns with Cities and Tribal goals.

D. Agency Consultation

The County will enter Agency Consultations during the Environmental Review and Permitting Process.

E. Community Demographics

Community Demographics have been collected from EJSCREEN, a tool that EPA has developed to measure a community's Demographic characteristics compared to the respective State and US.

See <https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper> for more information on the tool.

To calculate a single EJ Index, EJSCREEN uses a formula to combine a single environmental factor with the demographic indicator. It considers how much the local demographics are above the national average. It does this by looking at the difference between the demographic composition of the block group, as measured by the Demographic Index, and the national average (which is approximately 35%). It also considers the population size of the block group, although most block groups are similar in population size.

EJSCREEN calculates the EJ Index by multiplying together three items:

EJ Index =

- (The Environmental Indicator)
- X (Demographic Index for Block Group – Demographic Index for US)
- X (Population count for Block Group)

Demographics in the EJ Index

The demographic portions of the EJ Index can be thought of as the additional number of susceptible individuals in the block group, beyond what you would expect for a block group with this size total population. The terms "susceptible" or "potentially susceptible individuals" are used informally in these examples, to think of the Demographic Index times the population count in a block group. This is essentially the average of the count of minorities and count of low-income individuals¹. It is easiest to think of the average of these counts as "the susceptible individuals" in these examples.

The number of potentially susceptible individuals (Demographic. Index times population count) of course is typically less than the actual number who are minority, low-income or both. The demographic breakdown is not reported by block group –the ACS does not provide that level of resolution on the overlaps.

Overview of Demographic Indicators in EJSCREEN

EJSCREEN uses demographic factors as very general indicators of a community's potential susceptibility to the types of environmental factors included in this screening tool, as explained further in the EJSCREEN Technical Documentation. EJSCREEN has been designed in the context of EPA's EJ policies, including EPA's Final Guidance on Considering Environmental Justice During the Development of an Action (U.S. EPA, 2010). That guidance document explained EPA's focus on demographics as an indicator of potential susceptibility to environmental pollution.

There are six demographic indicators:

Percent Low-Income:

The percent of a block group's population in households where the household income is less than or equal to twice the federal "poverty level."

Percent People of Color:

The percent of individuals in a block group who list their racial status as a race other than white alone and/or list their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino. That is, all people other than non-Hispanic white-alone individuals. The word "alone" in this case indicates that the person is of a single race, not multiracial.

Less than high school education:

Percent of people age 25 or older in a block group whose education is short of a high school diploma.

Linguistic isolation:

Percent of people in a block group living in linguistically isolated households. A household in which all members age 14 years and over speak a non-English language and also speak English less than "very well" (have difficulty with English) is linguistically isolated.

Individuals under age 5:

Percent of people in a block group under the age of 5.

Individuals over age 64:

Percent of people in a block group over the age of 64.

Demographic Index

EJSCREEN includes an index that is based on the above demographic indicators. A Demographic Index is based on the average of two demographic indicators: Percent Low-Income and Percent Minority.

Table 1: Comparison of Project Area Demographics to State and National Averages

Comparison	Value of Buffered Area	WA State		US	
		Average	Percentile	Average	Percentile
Demographic Index	17%	28%	27	35%	26
Supplemental Demographic Index	12%	12%	58	15%	45
People of Color	2%	33%	2	40%	8
Low Income	32%	24%	70	30%	57
Unemployment Rate	0%	5%	0	5%	0
Limited English Speaking	0%	4%	0	5%	0
Less Than High School Education	8%	8%	61	12%	49
Under Age 5	9%	6%	79	6%	79
Over Age 64	46%	15%	98	16%	97

Source: EJSCREEN 5/29/2023

Legend

	Below US Average
	Above US Average
	Double or more than the US Average

The area estimated to receive benefits from the Project has a Demographic Index of 17% is in the 27th percentile of the State of WA and the 26th percentile of the US.

People of Color Index at 2% is significantly lower than the State demographic mix of 33%. Thus, this area is in 2nd percentile for the State, and 8th percentile for the US.

For low income, this area is 32% which is in the 70th percentile of the State of WA and the 57th percentile of the US.

For age ranges:

Under Age 5, the population in this age range in this area is 9% compared to 6% in Washington State and the US.

Over age 64, this area has slightly less than half of their population (46%) over age 64. Thus, this area's age range is in the 98th percentile of the State of WA and 97th percentile of the US.

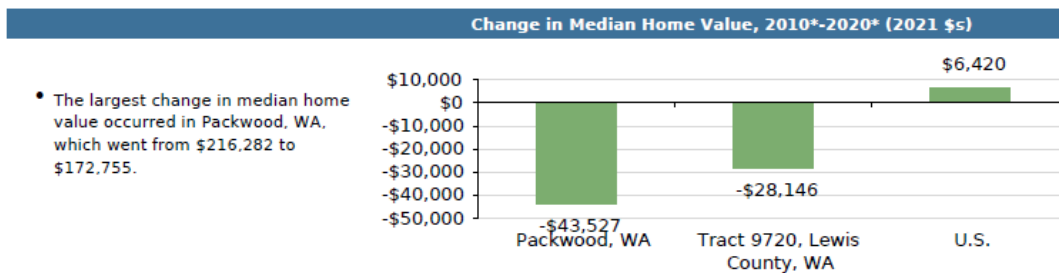
Based upon these observations, it appears the Low-Income demographics is the primary driver for the Demographic Index. Thus, it will be important to consider any elements of the Project that will have an undue impact on the area's low-income population. Language Literacy should not be a barrier to the area residents as the 2020 Census reported there are no populations within the area with limited English skills.

Map 3: EJSCREEN Estimated Project Area for the Packwood Sewer System Project



Source: EJSCREEN 5/29/2023

Table 2: Change in Median Home Value, 2010-2020 (in 2021\$)



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. 2022. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Chapter 3: PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

A. Desired Outcomes of Participation

To develop an effective strategy for public participation, the desired outcomes must first be understood.

The Cities desired outcomes for public participation in this Project 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 participate including interactive meeting formats, web-based educational materials, and
- Strengthen community understanding of planning terms and processes.
- Develop long term relationships that will help implement the project.

B. Participation Strategies

Each step in the process is addressed below, including the types of participation and tools that will be used. The tools are further described in Chapter 4.

1. Project Kick Off

The Project has been in the development process and discussed in the public arena for many years. Based upon past activities, there is not a need for a formal Kick-Off meeting at this time.

2. Community Updates / Environmental Review Comment Opportunities

The goal of Formal Comment Periods is to provide project stakeholders the opportunity to formally submit comments on the project and share their opinions of both positive and negative aspects of the project. These comments will be collected and reviewed for applicability. The results of comments will be used to refine mitigation recommendations. There will be public notification of available documents for review and comment with specific comment periods and methods to submit the comments to either the County or a specific review agency. All public notices will be listed on the Project webpage.

Additional Steps in the Process will be identified and described as the Project timeline is refined.

Collaborate – Staff will provide a Project Overview and updates on the Project and process at Open Houses and community meetings. Questions and comments will be collected from the audience. The FAQ document will be updated from questions submitted at these community meetings and posted on the Project Webpage at

Involve – Staff will attend existing community meetings to provide information about the Project, and answer questions.

Inform – The project webpage will be updated on the Project’s website that will display current information about the project. The Cities will partner with community organizations to share information about the project on their Social media platforms as appropriate. The Cities will also share all information with local news media including newspapers and radio stations.

3. Project Construction

The Goal of the County during the Construction Phase of the Project is to keep the community apprised of construction activities that will impact access to the area and surrounding businesses and neighborhoods. As of May 2023, the Project schedule anticipates the construction to start in 2025 with the Project fully operational in 2027.

A project of this magnitude will take between 18 and 20 months to complete all phases of the project, including design, plan sets, and contract documents to support the construction of the project. HDR Engineering, Inc., commenced with design of the project in March 2023 and provide final construction documents for contractor bid by the end of October 2024. Future construction of the project is anticipated to start in early 2025 with a construction period of 24-months following the award of the contract to the selected bidder.

The County plans to use electronic traffic signages for any detours or closures. Information will be posted on the Project webpage as well as disseminated on social media and other traffic notification platforms.

Chapter 4: PARTICIPATION 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 Project webpage dedicated to the Packwood Sewer System was activated early in 2023 at the beginning of this phase of the project and can be found at [packwood-sewer-project](https://packwood-sewer-project.com).

Documents, engagement materials, an outreach event and public comment calendar and other information will be posted on the webpage.

Email

An email list of interested people will be created for the Project. 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. To sign up for the email list can be found on the webpage email Mark Burch, Special Projects Manager at Mark.burch@lewiscountywa.gov

Social Media

There will not be a Packwood Sewer System social media platform hosted by Lewis County. Staff will push information out on to existing platforms within the community that may include but not limited to:

- Packwood Washington Information Group
- Packwood Improvement Club
- Packwoodians Unite!
- East Lewis County News
- Lewis County News and Events
- Living Lewis County
- Lewis County Happenings 2.0

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

Newspapers

The County will utilize traditional media as appropriate to inform the community. The County plans to partner with local media and community organizations to help share information related to the project on their existing media platforms. Potential partners could include:

- The Daily Chronical
- East County Journal

- The Highway Shopper
- Local Chamber of Commerce

Staff will 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 prior to the first public meeting, a final press release will be made when the final design is complete and legal notices of public hearings will be published. The media is invited to attend community meetings. Staff hope additional articles will be written during the process.

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.

County and HDR Staff are available to attend any other community meeting upon request, including association meetings, neighborhood meetings, etc. Staff may identify other ongoing meetings to attend.

Hosted

County Public Works Staff plan to host community meetings to collaborate with the public.

Local Media

Staff will engage with local media 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 this phase of the project, a press release will be made when the Environmental Assessment draft is complete and available for public comment, and legal notices of public hearings will be published. Staff hope additional coverage will occur during the process. The media is invited to attend all community and commission meetings.

County Council Meetings

The public is welcome and encouraged to attend all Lewis Board of County Commissioners Meetings either in person, or virtually. Staff will give periodic updates on the project over the next several years and each Commissioner Meeting offers any opportunity for public comment.

Lewis County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)

The public is invited to attend any Lewis County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) meeting in person. Select meetings including the weekly Wrap-Up, Directors' Update and Business Meetings as well as the monthly Mayors' Meetings are also available via Zoom. For the call-in and / or login information, please scroll to the bottom of the corresponding agenda(s) which can be found at [Agendas & Calendar \(lewiscountywa.gov\)](https://www.lewiscountywa.gov/agendas-calendar)

The BOCC allows public comment at its regular meetings. Any topics can be addressed during the weekly legislative meeting (the "BOCC Business Meeting" held on Tuesdays), but for all other meetings, public comment is limited to final-action items listed on the agenda. Written comment may be submitted via email at bocc@lewiscountywa.gov or by mail at BOCC Public

Comment, 351 NW North Street, Chehalis, WA 98532. Written comments must be received at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting for which they're being submitted.

If special accommodations of any kind are required, please contact the BOCC at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting via email at bocc@lewiscountywa.gov or by phone at 360-740-1120.

Staff Contact

Mark Burch, Special Projects Manager, is the Lewis County Public Works Project Manager for this Project. He can be reached at (360)-740-2650 or Mark.burch@lewiscountywa.gov

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