

**Onalaska Subarea Plan
Community Advisory Committee
Meeting 3 Notes**

The meeting began with a reminder of the CAC mission. The CAC is a group of people who have volunteered to give advice to Lewis County staff and Planning Commission about the vision of Onalaska in 20 years with goals and policies to achieve that vision. The final product is a document, prepared by staff, that captures the CAC's discussions and direction. The process to adopt the subarea plan includes a public hearing at the Planning Commission, followed by a public hearing at the Board of County Commissioners.

Next, there was Q&A on the materials that were shared prior to the meeting. One of the questions was related to a misconception. The question was if Onalaska would be incorporated as a city. Onalaska currently has an urban growth area (UGA) placed around the main part of town. A UGA is one of the requirements for incorporation. The second requirement is to have a population within that UGA of 1,500 residents. In 2022, the Office of Financial Management's small area estimate for Onalaska was a population of 562 people. The projected 20-year population is forecasted at roughly 700 people, less than half what is necessary to consider incorporation. Therefore, incorporation will not be considered as part of the subarea plan.

Following Q&A, the members were split into 3 small groups to discuss two vision statements. The vision statements were developed during the first two CAC meetings and are available on the webpage in the Meeting 2 notes <https://lewiscountywa.gov/departments/community-development/rezones/comprehensive-plan-and-development-regulation-amendments/onalaska-subarea-plan/>. The small groups used the guiding questions provided by staff to provide additional details about each statement. The results of the conversation were reported to the larger group. There was considerable agreement and overlap between the groups. A summary is provided below. Also included are responses from a CAC member who was unable to attend. Staff had offered to anyone who could not attend to provide responses before the meeting.

Small Group 1: Preserve the small-town character and history of Onalaska

1. What does "small town character" mean?
 - People can afford to live in and near town
 - Local stores and local places to gather
 - A similar visual look, but structures are allowed to be unique (not cookie-cutter)
 - A culture of being neighborly, knowing and welcoming people, feeling safe
 - Slower pace than the city

2. What is unique about Onalaska that exemplifies small town character?
 - Surrounded by small farms, town is center
 - History of homesteading, similar look to houses and businesses
 - Small grocery store, gas station, post office – locally owned
 - Carlisle Lake and school within walking distance
 - Community events (Apple Festival) and involvement – community experiences
 - No traffic congestion

3. What is the history of Onalaska that needs to be preserved?
 - Historic buildings from the logging era
 - Carlisle Lake and smokestack
 - Small farms and the farm-focused community

4. What in Onalaska exemplifies its history?
 - Carlisle Park, Quilt Shop, Logger Café, Presbyterian Church, Brenda's, Justice Grocery

Small Group 2: Statement: Maintain the unique sense of place.

1. What is unique about Onalaska?
 - Onalaska is a crossroads where people shop and gather
 - Original logging-era houses and buildings
 - It's a complete community, not a bedroom community – has school, grocery, post office, hardware, and affordable homes
 - Carlisle Lake, school, Observatory
 - Newaukum River valley

2. What creates a "sense of place" now?
 - Historic houses and buildings
 - Locally owned, unique business not found anywhere else
 - Keep "crafter culture"
 - Carlisle Lake and school within walking distance
 - Surrounding farms, rural areas and nearby recreation

3. What should be preserved in order to maintain the "sense of place"?
 - Small population, not a lot of new development
 - Encourage locally-owned businesses
 - Encourage community gathering spaces, youth sports/activities
 - Preserve historic buildings and structures (e.g. smokestack)
 - Preserve the surrounding small farms and rural areas
 - Protected the natural environment

4. What could be added to support or increase the "sense of place" of Onalaska?

- Encourage new, small businesses
- New businesses should fit the look and feel of Onalaska – logging and farming roots
- Traffic calming and bike/ped improvements so it continues to be safe to walk and bike around town
- Support multi-generational housing, kids returning
- Complete community, not a bedroom community – housing, jobs, stores
- Renew wild salmon runs
- Continue to support teaching on Onalaska's history, including indigenous people and Chinese labor
 - Tour guide with written history
 - Local museum