Adams County
Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update
2027 - 2047

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN



March 10, 2026

Contents

1.0 Introduction 3
1.1 Purpose 3
1.2 Background & Guidelines 3
1.3 Guiding Principles 4
2.0 Public Participation Opportunities 5
2.1 Participants 5
2.2. Outreach 7
2.3 Communication Program 7
2.4 Update Kick-Off and Policy Workshop 8
2.5 Additional Outreach Workshop - Ritzville 8
2.6 Formal Public Meetings: Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) 9
2.7 Tentative Schedule 9
3.0 Public Involvement Implementation and Documentation 10
3.1 Documentation 10

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Adams County is conducting a periodic review and update of its Comprehensive Plan and development regulations in accordance with the state's Growth Management Act (GMA). The GMA requires local governments to establish procedures for early and continuous public participation in the development of and the amendment of comprehensive plans and development regulations. The procedures must provide for broad dissemination of proposals and alternatives, opportunity for written comments, public meetings after effective notice, provisions for open discussion, communication programs, information services, and consideration of and response to public comments. This Public Participation Plan (PPP) intends to meet state requirements for public involvement in the update process and strives to address the priorities and issues specific to Adams County.

Effectively involving the public in the update process can present unique challenges due to the number of properties affected, the large acreage of the County, and the diverse perspectives and viewpoints of stakeholders. The purpose of this document is to address these challenges, to guide the public participation process for the update, and encourage active involvement by a wide range of interests. It does this by identifying: objectives and project themes, public participation opportunities, roles and responsibilities, and an anticipated timeline.

This PPP is intended to achieve specific desired outcomes, which include:

- A public involvement process that provides clear information to the public on the purpose of the update process and how it works;
- Public meetings and events designed to provide opportunities for all interested parties to be heard, and for people to listen and learn from one another;
- Public participation events conducted in locations and at times where it will be convenient for citizens to contribute to the update process and provide opportunities for involvement from individuals who are unable to attend meetings;
- Broad participation of all interested groups and individuals regardless of point of view;
- All participant viewpoints will be given due consideration; and
- A transparent process that clearly documents all public input and makes it available for public review.

1.2 Background & Guidelines

Growth Management Act (GMA) Background
The GMA is a state law requiring state and local governments to manage Washington's growth. The state Legislature adopted the GMA (Chapter 36.70A RCW) in 1990, after finding that uncoordinated and unplanned growth, together with a lack of common goals expressing the public's interest in the conservation and the wise use of our lands, pose a threat to the environment, sustainable economic development, and the health, safety, and high quality of life enjoyed by residents of this

state. It is in the public interest that citizens, communities, local governments, and the private sector cooperate and coordinate with one another in comprehensive land use planning.

While providing a framework for elements to be considered and addressed, the GMA focuses on local decision-making and local control and balancing all of the goals of the GMA. The GMA establishes state goals, sets compliance deadlines, provides direction on how to prepare local comprehensive plans and development regulations, and sets forth requirements for early and continuous public participation.

Adams County is “partially planning” under the GMA. “Partially planning” jurisdictions are counties and cities within their jurisdictions that do not meet GMA population and growth rate thresholds to be considered fully planning, or have not chosen to fully plan under the GMA. While still required to have a Comprehensive Plan, partially planning jurisdictions have fewer requirements under the GMA and are only required to protect critical areas and designate natural resource lands; however, the County has decided to review and update all elements of the Comprehensive Plan as a part of this Update process. Adams County is committed to having robust public participation and input.

Adams County Comprehensive Plan

The County’s Comprehensive Plan is an expression of the County’s values and priorities. The Comprehensive Plan provides a 20-year vision for how the citizens of the community want their County to look and to function. The County first adopted a Comprehensive Plan in 1965. After the passage of the GMA, the County adopted a new Comprehensive Plan in 2005 to address the elements required by the GMA. Subsequently, the County adopted a 2015 Comprehensive Plan. The County’s Shoreline Master Program, an element of the Comprehensive Plan, was amended in 2023.

The County is required to review and update as necessary their Comprehensive plan and development regulations by June 30, 2027. This will include the public’s values over the 20-year planning window of 2027-2047 and include updating the plan and development regulations to reflect current law.

County Development Regulations

Development regulations are controls placed on development or land use activities by the County and include but is not limited to development codes for zoning, critical areas, planned unit developments, and subdivisions. The County’s development regulations implement the policies of the Comprehensive Plan. The GMA requires the County’s development regulations to be consistent with its adopted Comprehensive Plan.

1.3 Guiding Principles

For any public participation process, it is important to adhere to a set of guiding principles. For the Comprehensive Plan periodic update, these principles include:

1. Communicate the purpose, scope, and objectives throughout the duration of the update process (i.e., schedule, decision milestones, progress, and involvement opportunities).
2. Use the County's website, newspaper, mailings, and other media to distribute general information to the public.
3. Conduct public involvement consistent with the GMA policies for transparent and open government.
4. Seek out and use input from local stakeholders as well as technical experts about opportunities and issues of concern.
5. Define and effectively communicate the roles and interests of all participants.
6. Keep all written communication clear, concise, and objective.
7. Communicate and distribute information/feedback regularly to participants, and at intervals to interested/affected parties.
8. Use community resources and energies effectively and efficiently and consider the relative cost-effectiveness of alternative techniques to achieve goals, policies and objectives.

2.0 Public Participation Opportunities

2.1 Participants

The PPP establishes a process that is designed to reach all audiences that may have an interest in the update process. It will also be designed to reach out to other groups and individuals, in order to encourage their awareness, understanding, and involvement in the process. The following broad groups are identified to contact and engage. Any group or individuals may be added to the list.

- General public:
  - County residents and landowners
  - Local businesses and employees
  - Farmers
- Tribes:
  - Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
  - Colville Tribe
  - Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
  - Nez Perce Tribe
  - Wanapum Tribe
  - Spokane Tribe of Indians
  - Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
- County Boards and Commissions:
  - Adams County Planning Commission
- Government Agencies:
  - Adams County Health Department
  - East Adams Library District
  - Mid-Columbia Libraries
  - Jurisdictions within the County
    - Cities of Othello, Ritzville, Washtucna, Lind, and Hatton

    - Washtucna School District No. 43, Benge School District No. 122, Lind-Ritzville Cooperative School District No. 160-67, Othello School District No.147-163-55.
    - US Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
    - US Bureau of Reclamation
    - Washington State Department of Ecology
    - Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife
    - Washington State Department of Natural Resources
    - Washington State Department of Transportation
    - US Army Corps of Engineers
    - Adams County Fire Districts
    - Columbia Basin Conservation District
    - Port of Othello
    - Adams County Development Council
- Property owners
    - Businesses
    - Churches/ faith-based organizations
    - Farmers
    - Residential property owners
- Non-Governmental businesses and organizations:
    - Washington State Water Resources Association
    - Voices for Rural Action
    - Washington Association of Wheat Growers
    - Adams County Historical Society
    - Futurewise
    - Central Basin Audubon Society
    - East Adams Rural Healthcare
    - Othello Community Hospital
    - Othello Housing Authority
    - Catholic Charities Serving Central Washington
    - Integrated Health Care Services – healthcare resource for Veterans
    - H E Gritman Senior Center (Ritzville)
    - Sports Organizations
    - Recreation groups
- Service Providers, Utilities and Transportation:
    - City of Ritzville Water
    - City of Ritzville Sewer
    - Adams County Solid Waste & Recycling
    - Big Bend Electric Cooperative Inc.
    - Avista Utilities
    - Cascade Natural Gas
    - Qwest/Century Link

    - East Columbia Irrigation District
    - Quincy Columbia Basin Irrigation District
- Media: Local newspapers, television, radio stations, etc.
    - The Ritzville Adams County Journal
    - Adams County Development Council – News
    - Columbia Basin Herald
    - Othello Outlook
    - Kwiq Radio (Ritzville)
    - KONA 610 AM
    - K268DM

2.2. Outreach

Outreach activities will be designed to keep all interested parties and these groups informed and updated on key meetings, decision-making milestones, and overall project progress. The public involvement process is designed to encourage all groups to participate and to adequately inform all groups, as feasible. County staff will attempt to contact all of the groups listed above

The County is committed to providing multiple opportunities for public participation throughout the process and will use a variety of communication tools to inform the public and encourage their participation.

2.3 Communication Program

County staff will communicate with the public continuously throughout the update process to ensure that the broader population is informed and has meaningful opportunities to participate. Some key elements of this program include:

- **Website:** Adams County Planning will provide a link to a webpage maintained for interested citizens and groups to access draft documents and maps, view the project schedule, check for meeting notices and materials, see submitted public comments, obtain contact information, and submit comments. The webpage and project calendar will be updated as new information and reports become available.
- **Bilingual Communication:** According to the 2023 census, around 64 percent of the population of Adams County are of Hispanic or Latino origin and many speak Spanish as their first language. Per 2023 ACS data, approximately 23% of people are foreign-born. Of all citizens 18 and older, approximately 49% speak Spanish. Efforts will be made to provide translators at public meetings and public notices will be issued in Spanish and English.
- **Direct Mailings and Public Notices:** Notices of workshops, public hearings, and other update events and milestones will be placed on the project website, posted at the Courthouse, and published in the local newspaper of record (The Ritzville Adams County Journal). A mailing list of interested parties will be maintained and updated to keep the public informed throughout the update process. Notices will be sent to all

parties on the mailing list via email or US Mail. State agencies and affected governments will be notified of key milestones in writing via US Mail or email.

- **Comment Forms**: Comment forms will be made available at public facilities, such as the Courthouse, as well as on the project website. All comments will be recorded, and responses will be made available to the public in both unedited and summarized form.
- **Tribal Engagement**: Tribes may choose whether or not to formally participate in this periodic update. If tribes decline to participate, the County will still share updates and invite tribal input throughout the planning process.
- **Meetings with Interest Groups**: To the extent feasible, the County will make staff available to meet with Interest Groups to discuss the project.
- **Written Comment**: Continuous opportunities will be extended for citizens to provide written comment. Written comments may be in the form of letters, emails, and other correspondence to the County regarding the plan or comments received electronically on the project website. A log of all written comments received according to the specific area of comprehensive plan will be maintained.
- **Survey**: One public survey will be conducted to gain input from the public on various important topics. The survey will be posted and promoted online. Hard copies will be made available to the public by request.
- **Virtual Opportunities**: Geographic, childcare, work, and other obligations add constraints to attending in-person meetings. Many of the public meetings will have virtual participation offered.

2.4 Update Kick-Off and Policy Workshop

The County will conduct an initial workshop to introduce the update effort in a public setting. Broad topics will be discussed to address the larger question, “What policy updates does the community feel are needed, given growth and changes since the previous update?

The workshop will provide a forum for public input on the update process, and may include stations, breakout discussion groups, participatory exercises, and other techniques to solicit stakeholder feedback. Identification of key regulatory concerns for residents is the primary purpose of these workshops.

The County will use this input to guide formation of policies for the updated plan.

2.5 Additional Outreach Workshop - Ritzville

The County will conduct at least one satellite workshop in Ritzville. The workshop will provide a forum for public input on the update process, and may include stations, breakout discussion groups, participatory exercises, and other techniques to solicit stakeholder feedback. Identification of key regulatory concerns for rural residents is a primary purpose of these workshops.

The County will use this input to guide formation of policies for the updated plan.

2.6 Formal Public Meetings: Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)

The Planning Commission will hold public meetings during critical points in the update process. Planning Commission meetings will include discussion among Planning Commissioners on key planning-related policy and regulatory decisions that are to be brought forward to the BOCC. Such meetings also allow for questions and comments from the public.

The Planning Commission will hold at least one open record public hearing to take formal comments prior to making a recommendation to the BOCC.

The BOCC meets regularly to discuss and make decisions on policies and regulations, and all BOCC meetings are open to the public. The BOCC is required by law to hold at least one open record public hearing prior to adoption of the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations update. The BOCC may decide to hold workshops and additional hearings at any point during the process to receive updates from the Planning staff and/or the public.

2.7 Tentative Schedule

This tentative schedule is subject to change. Events will be advertised and noticed as required.



3.0 Public Involvement Implementation and Documentation

3.1 Documentation

All public outreach efforts and the results of those efforts will be documented in the administrative record maintained by the County. Documentation will include invitation letters and responses, meeting and hearing notices, meeting materials, meeting notes with attendance and comments received, draft and final work products, and other information as applicable. The County will keep a public comment and response matrix which will include all comments made, as well as the County staff's response to the comments.