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Comp Plan Road Show

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What is the Comp Plan Road Show?



The Comp Plan Road Show is a volunteer project to gather public input on the Whatcom County 2036 Comprehensive Plan update, facilitated by RE Sources for Sustainable Communities and the League of Women Voters. It was an opportunity to transcend divisive political dialog and offer citizens a chance to discuss policy and growth issues in a low-pressure setting, where all viewpoints were respected.

From May through August 2015, the Comp Plan Road Show visited several venues throughout Whatcom County. We taught residents about the Comprehensive Plan, how it works, why it's important, and how their input

is an important part of the process.

Through four months of outreach and 400 conversations, we discovered the public has much to say about where and how we grow. When presented with information in an unbiased way and listened to attentively, citizens showed they care about what goes into the Comprehensive Plan — no matter their views.

How it worked



We visited **ten locations** and talked to **413 residents** throughout Whatcom County.

In **Lynden, Ferndale** and **Blaine**, we visited the Whatcom County Farm Bureau, Blaine Farmers Market, Ferndale Farmers Market and Lynden Farmers Market.

In **Bellingham**, we visited: League of Women Voters, Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship, Bellingham Quakers, Surfrider Foundation, Bellingham Farmers Market and Fairhaven Farmers Market.

We asked residents for their feedback through an interactive exercise based off a Whatcom County questionnaire. We created 15 jars, each labeled with a value, and asked residents to choose their top five priorities by placing a penny in each jar. The four value categories ranked highest among everyone:

1. Clean water and air
2. Parks, trails, open spaces, and recreational opportunities
3. Availability of jobs
4. Healthcare services

In 2036, What should Whatcom County be known for?



We also asked residents to cast their vision of Whatcom County's most desired future, in their own words. Responses revealed that water, jobs, community, and housing are of primary importance. Most often, residents used the words community, clean, housing, water, jobs, air, affordable, energy, and sustainable.

To summarize the written statements, residents envision a Whatcom County that is known for:

- **More:** jobs, housing, transportation, health care services and opportunities to promote community character, and public safety services.
- **Water:** clean, conservation, protection and restoration of the environment, for water rights, water-dependent development, and water-dependent transportation.
- **Jobs:** living/skilled-wage, well-paying or white collar, good-for-the-environment, clean energy, local, productive, and sustainable.

- **Community:** inclusive housing and health care services, diverse, sustainable and cohesive (multi-generationally, economically and culturally inclusive) character.
- **Housing:** abundance, affordable, diversity of choices that serve the needs of an aging and alternatively-abled population, and opportunities to live in quality, safe and secure housing in proximity to open spaces.

Conclusion

The feedback gathered through the Comp Plan Road Show provides supplemental information to inform Whatcom County's planning process. It is clear our community feels strongly about the future of Whatcom County as a place known for a clean and accessible environment, healthy and diverse housing opportunities, an abundance of sustainable, family-supporting jobs, and access to affordable, quality, and alternative health care.

Because we listened without bias, the Comp Plan Road Show:

- Developed trust
- Broke down cynicism about governments
- Built relationships in place of political barriers
- Empowered residents to engage in their county's future
- Heard from those who would otherwise be unlikely to speak up (and very unlikely to submit public comment)

The information we received was informative. The process of soliciting it was invaluable.



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