



Town of La Conner

Dear Community Member(s),

The Town of La Conner invites you to **actively participate in** a Community Round Table discussion on the Public Participation Program for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update on **February 7th, 2023 at 6:00 pm in Maple Hall, La Conner, WA.**

The Comprehensive Plan is the guiding document for long-term planning and development in La Conner. Every 10 years Washington State requires that cities and counties update this guiding document to better reflect the current development and planning trajectory of a municipality.

As the Town moves through the update process, our top priority to hear from citizens and community groups regarding the future of La Conner. As such, La Conner is developing a robust Public Participation Program, and welcomes your thoughts on the most effective community communication strategies. This introduction Community Round Table is designed to be a brainstorming session with community members and stakeholders to produce the most widespread and effective public participation possible, including extensive outreach to groups we do not typically hear from, such as high school seniors and those involved with affordable housing.

We hope that you will attend and freely share your thoughts around community outreach for this upcoming Round Table Discussion.

In Community,

Michael Davolio, Planning Director

Ajah Eills, Assistant Planner

Town of La Conner

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Town of La Conner

P.O. Box 400
La Conner, WA 98257

Staff Report

To: Town Council and Planning Commission
From: Michael Davolio, ACIP, Planning Director
Ajah Eills, Assistant Planner
Subject: February 8th Community Round Table
Date: February 28, 2023

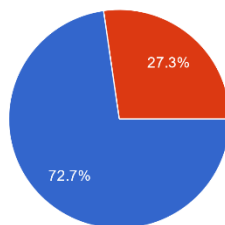
On February 7th 2023, the Town of La Conner held its first Community Round Table (CRT) to discuss improvements in our Public Participation Program for the Comprehensive Plan Update. This CRT consisted of a discussion to brainstorm engagement strategies, and a survey designed to evaluate current community interest. Full and complete discussion minutes will be available in the Planning Commission minutes from their 2/21/2023 meeting; here the survey results are presented and a list of potential engagement options that was generated from the CRT are presented. **The Planning Commission and Town Council are asked to recommended 3-4 of the presented engagement strategies for the Planning Department to focus on in March and April.**

Survey Results:

Please note that this survey was presented to a non-random selection of participants (those at the CRT) and so although it provides good anecdotal evidence and a starting point, statistical analysis will not be able to be performed on these results

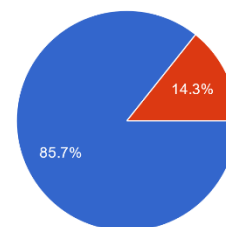
In all, we received 23 responses to the survey, although not all questions on all surveys were filled out entirely. The following charts provide the anonymized survey data.

La Conner Resident?
22 responses



● Yes
● No

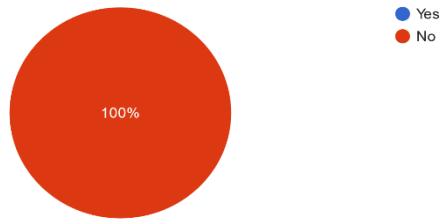
Live within the La Conner School District
21 responses



● Yes
● No

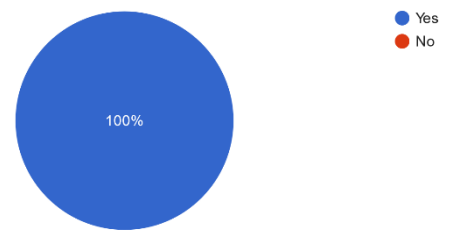
Member of Swinomish Tribe?

17 responses



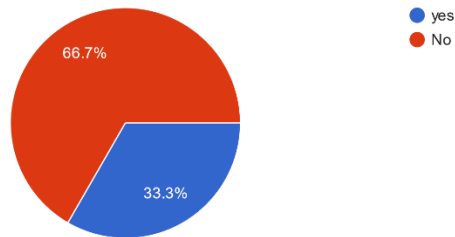
Are you interested in receiving email updates from the town about the comp plan?

22 responses



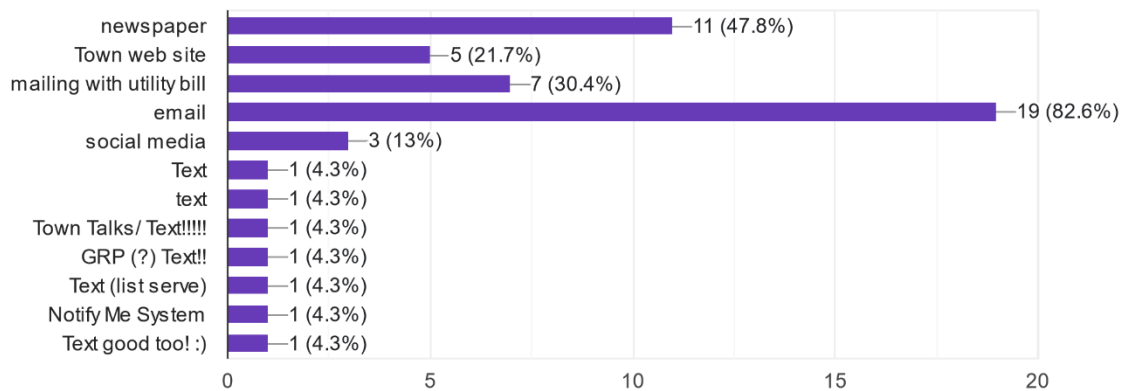
Weekend meetings be helpful?

21 responses



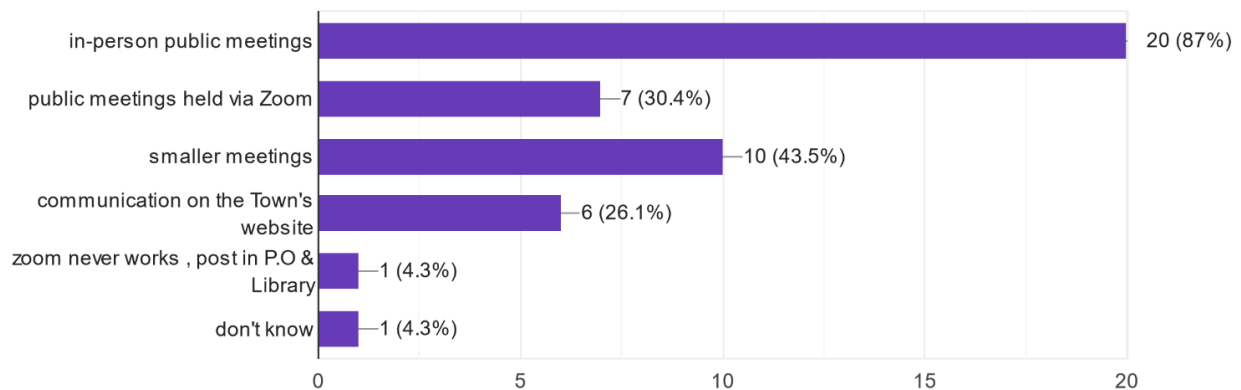
What is the best way to reach you with information?

23 responses



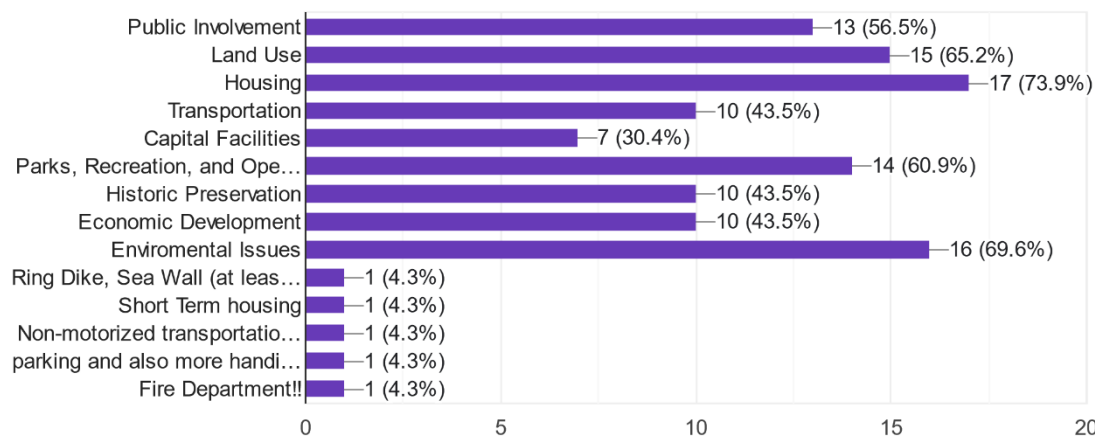
In what ways are you most likely to participate in public discussions?

23 responses



During the next two years, what issues are most important to you?

23 responses



A key takeaway is the above graph, which indicates that respondents were interested in the following topics, briefly summarized here:

1. **Housing:** La Conner will be doing an extensive inventory of existing housing and needed housing in La Conner, with the goal of increasing affordable housing in our community. Department of Commerce has released detailed guidelines about how to compete this inventory, and La Conner will be working with Skagit County on the allocation of the county-wide population and housing projections. We will know more about how this allocation will affect La Conner When the final guidelines from Department of Commerce and the final numbers from the 2020 census are released by the middle of March.

2. Environmental Issues: La Conner, like other coastal towns, must prepare for how the changing climate will impact the Town, particularly when it comes to sea level rise and high tide flooding. We will be looking at the 2022 Technical Sea Level Rise Report and accompanying Application Guide for the most recent scientist data and projections. The Planning Department is currently preparing a staff report related to sea level rise and high tide flooding, and hopes to present it at the combined Town Council/Planning Commission meeting.
3. Land Use: La Conner will continue to review its land use regulations to ensure all regulations are consistent with federal, state, and county guidelines, as well as internally consistent among the Comprehensive Plan, the Municipal Code, and the Shoreline Master Program. This also may include zoning reform designed to help accomplish our housing or other goals.
4. Parks: La Conner recently updated its Parks, Recreation, and Open Space element and we plan on reviewing the update for internal and external compliance, with special attention paid to balance of substantiable development with retention of open space in La Conner. La Conner also plans to review the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space elements for compliance with the Department of Justice ruling on Other Power Driven Mobility Devices (OPDMDs).
5. Public Involvement: La Conner is currently undergoing an evaluation and restructuring of our Public Participation Program. We are reaching out to all segments of our community to ensure that each citizen of La Conner, if they choose, has easy access or a clear means of obtaining access to Town information. As part of this effort, La Conner has begun Community Round Tables, informal sessions of the Planning Commission designed to help connect the Planning Department with the community. This staff report contains information gleaned from the first Community Round Table.

Data Discussion:

As can be seen, although the majority of respondents were in La Conner and the La Conner School District, not one person was a member of the Swinomish Tribe. We will continue our outreach efforts with the tribe. All respondents that answered were interested in receiving updates by email about the Comprehensive Plan. The majority of the respondents indicated that email and the newspaper would be good ways to reach them with information. In addition, people indicated that they would be most likely to participate in in-person public meetings, with about 1/3 of respondents indicating that an occasional weekend meeting would be helpful. Respondents were more varied on the issues that are important to them, with Housing, Environmental Issues, Land Use, Public Involvement, and Parks, Recreation, and Open Space each receiving over 50% of the vote (respondents could choose more than one issue).

Respondents also included the following notes in the surveys open response (punctuation and spelling are as they appear in the original response):

- How do we include the voice of the elderly and physically impaired?
- Pay Parking, public lots, public trains in/around town, smart meters EV – public trans – EV-Charging fast charge
- Pls give a report on in lieu of parking fund
- parking regulations need to be standardized and applied uniformly
- What is community vision of La Conner?
- channel cove – Thank you!
- Just some extras: No adult stores. No marijuana stores. No marijuana manufacturing. No gun stores. No Airbnb/Vrbo. No LED lighting.

Please note that the Port of Skagit is also currently undergoing its own community visioning process, in anticipation of their effort to review and update their commercially-zoned properties. Moving forward, we intend to increase lines of communication with the Port as we both develop a forward-looking community vision.

Using the survey results and the general community discussion, the Planning Department has developed a list of potential community engagement strategies. **The Town Council and Planning Commission are asked to recommend 3-4 community engagement options for the Planning Department to focus on in March and April.**

Staff Takeaways: Potential ideas Community Engagement

- Place information in Town kiosks
- Public notices in an “article-like” tone in paper
 - Public Notices
 - Informational articles
 - Editorials
 - Agenda/Public hearings in paragraph form instead of legal notice form
 - Explanatory articles on how to sign up for Notify Me
- Include informational mailers in water bills
 - Surveys
 - Comprehensive Plan Information
 - Community Meeting/CRT Information
 - Instructions to sign up for Notify Me
- Reach out to Swinomish Tribal Paper about publishing public hearings/information about Comprehensive Plan
- Reach out to the Port of Skagit to improve consistency among our Comprehensive Plan and the Port’s Community Vision.
- Have informational meetings at retirement homes and assisted living homes/communities
- Have an informational meeting with the Chamber of Commerce
- Have information available during Senior Center hours

- “Ask a Planner” booths at public events
- Meet with the school board to learn about how we could engage the student population
- Create a Comprehensive Plan Email list
- Make changes to the website
 - Re-publish the guide to the website
 - Make “hot topics” more available on website
 - Make a section that outlines the upcoming public hearings
 - Update the Comprehensive Plan Update page
 - Place a button on the homepage with a direct link to the Planning Section

The Planning Department recognizes that implementation of all of the above strategies would be ideal. **However, staff capacity is limited. We are asking the Town Council and Planning Commission to please recommend 3-4 engagement strategies for Planning Department staff to focus on in March and April.**

Thank you for your time. If anyone would like the raw survey data, I am happy to provide it.

For Planning Commission Review:

Door Hanger Text for the Public Participation Program Update: 4/14/2023

FRONT OF DOOR HANGER

HELLO FROM THE LA CONNER PLANNING DEPARTMENT

La Conner's Comprehensive Plan is a document required by the State of Washington that guides development and land use in La Conner. It is updated every 10 years to reflect the changing needs of the community and the changing requirements of the state. The Comprehensive Plan includes 11 elements: Introduction, Public Participation, Community Profile, Economic, Land Use, Housing, Transportation, Utilities, Capital Facilities, and Parks and Recreation. **La Conner is currently updating this document, and would like community feedback to ensure that La Conner continues to improve in the next 10, 20, and 50 years.**

If you would like to inform this update, please take this survey in **ONE** of the following ways:

1. Scan the QR code on the back
2. Visit <https://www.townoflaconner.org/244/Comprehensive-Plan-Update>
3. Visit Town Hall Monday – Friday, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm and get a paper copy

BACK OF DOOR HANGER



Are you looking for specific information about La Conner? Try our town website:

Townoflaconner.org

Use the clickable buttons at the bottom of the screen to navigate to frequently used resources, or the menus at the top of the page to access more specific town information!

Stay updated with NOTIFY ME!

Notify Me lets you sign up for email and/or text notifications when information get posted to the Town of La Conner website. To sign up, visit townoflaconner.org and

1. Click on the "Notify Me" button OR
2. Go to the "How do I..." at the top of the page, and select "Notifications" on the drop-down menu

After you sign up for the lists that you want, please remember to **confirm your email** and get ready to receive notifications!