

A. Citizen Involvement

Mission Statement

The mission of the Polk County Citizen Involvement Program is to direct and encourage active, broad based citizen participation on all aspects of land use planning in Polk County.



Vision Statement

The citizen involvement program is the cornerstone for sound land use planning in Polk County. The citizen involvement program complies with and successfully implements Statewide Planning Goal 1: Citizen Involvement. The citizen involvement program is an integral element in the Polk County Comprehensive Plan. The citizen involvement program expresses the firm commitment of the people and elected officials in Polk County to provide meaningful opportunities for citizens to participate in the planning and development of Polk County.

Through careful planning, competent administration and adequate funding, the citizen involvement program affords all citizens in Polk County – property owners, land use applicants and the general public with a range of opportunities to obtain current information, provide meaningful input into decisions and learn about the technical aspects of land use planning. A Committee for Citizen Involvement regularly advises the County Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners on all matters associated with citizen participation in land use planning in Polk County. Based on a schedule in the comprehensive plan, the citizen involvement program is periodically evaluated, and as needed, revised in order to respond to changing conditions and the needs of citizens in Polk County.

As a result of the citizen involvement program, county residents and the public are afforded opportunities to participate early and often in the adoption, amendment and implementation of the Polk County comprehensive plan and land use regulations. Citizens are able to judge the effect of proposed land use policies and actions on their properties, neighborhoods and communities. Public notice of county land use decisions, pending applications and Planning Commission and Board of Commissioner meetings and hearings are issued in a timely, understandable manner and are readily accessible through postings, regular mail and the county's web page.

As a result of adhering to the citizen involvement program, contentious land use proceedings are less likely to occur because citizens have participated in plan and ordinance development and therefore understand and support the standards and requirements for reviewing land use applications. This in turn promotes continued interest in land use planning in Polk County and means that there are fewer instances where neighbors and adjoining land owners have to bear the expense and hostility often generated by contested land use hearings and appeals.

Elements of the Polk County Citizen Involvement Program

The Polk County Citizen Involvement Program shall consist of the following elements:

1. Goals and Policies adopted by the Board of Commissioners.
2. The Citizen Involvement Committee appointed by the Board of Commissioners.
3. An Annual Implementation Plan approved by the Board of Commissioners.

Background

In 1973, the Oregon State Legislature adopted Senate Bill 100, and for the first time, citizen participation in the local decision-making process became mandatory. It is now the right of every citizen to be involved in the preparation of plans, to have his/her ideas considered by decision-makers, and to have decision-makers respond to these ideas on local land-use and comprehensive planning. It is also the responsibility of every citizen to exercise these rights.

A strong citizen involvement program is felt to be essential to the success of the Polk County planning process. During the development of the comprehensive plan, citizen involvement was at its zenith for maximum participation. There were seven area advisory committees fully functioning and active. Subsequently, the number of these committees dwindled to two, then to one and finally, for a few months, there weren't any that were active. In the late 1990s, reactivation of some of these committees, interest in providing an outreach to inform more interested citizens and direction from the Committee for Citizen Involvement directed that a review of the Citizen Involvement Goals and Policies be undertaken. Upon revision of the goals and policies, new program elements were adopted in order to implement the goals and policies. In 2007, liability risks to the County, associated with County recognized self-appointed committees, increased as a result of the uncertainty in land use planning created by Measure 37 (2004). Polk County undertook a review of the citizen involvement program in light of the liability risks with the objective of reducing liability while still providing an effective program. As a result of this review, existing program elements were modified and adopted implementing a system to allow groups to register with the Planning Division to receive County planning information in place of a system of County recognized area advisory committees. These "registered groups" are self-organized and not officially recognized by the Board of Commissioners.

In recognition of the necessity and value of participation by its citizenry in the local government decision-making process, Polk County adopts the following goals and policies:

GOALS and POLICIES

- 1. GOAL 1. To provide for a wide range of opportunities for citizens to be involved in all public phases of the planning process in Polk County. For the purposes of the Polk County Citizen Involvement Program, the term "citizen" shall mean property owners, land use applicants and the general public.**
 - 1.1 Polk County will adopt and maintain a citizen involvement program that complies with Statewide Planning Goal 1 – Citizen Involvement.
 - 1.2 Private property rights of land owners and applicants for land use actions must be recognized as an important element in the land use planning process.
 - 1.3 Polk County will strive to permit those uses that have little or no impact on

neighboring properties without requiring a land use determination or limited land use determination.

- 1.4 Polk County will provide for a designated representative Committee for Citizen Involvement (CCI) to monitor, evaluate and make periodic recommendations on the structure and implementation of the Polk County citizen involvement program.
- 1.5 Polk County will provide notice to those citizens that may be affected by proposed and adopted land use decisions and actions including but not limited to: amendments to the comprehensive plan and implementing regulations, zone changes, land use determinations, variances, conditional use permits, dwelling approvals, land divisions and subdivisions.
- 1.6 Polk County will strive to encourage organizations, special districts, cities and affected local, state, tribal and federal government agencies to utilize the Polk County citizen involvement program to solicit and receive the views of the public concerning plans, programs and action affecting land use planning in Polk County.

2. GOAL 2. To make land use information readily available to the public in an understandable form and provided in a timely manner.

- 2.1 Polk County will prepare and make available to the public upon request clear and concise information reports, and supporting findings of fact and conclusions of law to citizens regarding County land use decisions and actions.
- 2.2 Polk County will, as required by law provide public notices of proposed and approved land use decisions that sufficient and concise information to enable citizens to provide timely, informed comments.
- 2.3 Polk County will employ a variety of methods to communicate land use information to citizens, government agencies and interested organizations including the news media, direct mailings, electronic means and public meetings, workshops and briefings.
- 2.4 Polk County will develop and employ a land use information and education program to increase the knowledge, awareness and understanding about all phases of land use planning in Polk County.

3. GOAL 3. To provide for an effective two-way communication on land use matters between citizens and Polk County officials, county departments and advisory bodies.

- 3.1 Polk County will provide information and procedures about how to communicate with the County Planning Commission, county staff and the Board of County Commissioners concerning County land use issues, decisions and actions.
- 3.2 Polk County will make available to the public timely responses from county staff, advisory bodies and elected officials regarding County land use actions and

decisions.

4. GOAL 4. To provide funding and staff support for the citizen involvement program.

- 4.1 Polk County will make reasonable effort to provide staff and possible financial resources to assist with implementation of the Polk County Citizen Involvement Program.
- 4.2 Polk County will provide notice and opportunity for the public and CCI to participate in the budget process concerning implementation of the Polk County Citizen Involvement Program.
- 4.3 Polk County will consider the interests and recommendations of the CCI regarding financial and staff support for the Polk County Citizen Involvement Program.

5. GOAL 5. To periodically evaluate and, as necessary, revise the citizen involvement program in response to changing conditions and needs of the citizens of Polk County.

- 5.1 On a time frame established by the Board of Commissioners, but not less than annually, the Committee for Citizen Involvement will prepare a report to the Board of County Commissioners evaluating the citizen involvement program and making any recommendations for changes or needed improvements.
- 5.2 Polk County's Citizen Involvement Program will contain evaluation criteria and procedures to guide the CCI and Board of Commissioners in evaluating citizen involvement in Polk County.
- 5.3 The CCI will submit an annual implementation plan to the Planning Commission for a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners. This plan will identify and prioritize items that will implement the adopted plan. This plan will be used in developing budget recommendations.