

Tips for Effective Participation in the Land Use Planning Process

Methow Conservancy Executive Director Jason Paulsen has been an active participant in each of the land use planning processes underway in Okanogan County, and shares the following suggestions and information for keeping informed and being effective in sharing your input as part of these important public land use planning processes.

1. **Take Time To Get Educated** – One of the biggest challenges with any land use planning process is making sure that everyone is working from the same base of facts. Start by visiting the Okanogan County Planning Department web site at <http://www.okanogancounty.org/planning/> to review the most current draft documents, proposed land use designation maps, and zoning maps. Then be sure to attend the meeting scheduled for **Wednesday, September 2nd at 6:30 p.m. in the Winthrop Barn.** **Your input will carry more weight if it is obvious that you have taken the time to get educated with factual information.**
2. **Understand the Process** – Most plans and regulations are first reviewed by the Planning Commission prior to being recommended to the County Commissioners. Opportunities for public participation exist at both levels. You will be most effective if you direct your input to the appropriate body – the body currently reviewing the document-- at the time of your submission. You can contact the Planning Department if you are unsure which body is reviewing a particular plan or regulation, though at this time (early Sept. 2009), all of the plans and regulations are currently under review by the Planning Commission.
3. **Provide Specific, Constructive Comments** – If you really want to help shape the future of your community through the new Comprehensive Plan and the various regulations under development, be sure that your comments are specific and offer solutions or alternatives that you believe should be considered. To see one of the letters the Methow Conservancy wrote click here: http://www.methowconservancy.org/comp_plan_letter.pdf
4. **Participate** – The Comprehensive Plan update provides a historic opportunity for citizens throughout Okanogan County to help shape the future of our communities. Take the time to attend the meeting on **Wednesday, September 2nd**, a future Planning Commission meeting, or an upcoming Public Hearing. If you cannot attend, submit your input in writing well in advance of the meeting or hearing so that the Planning Commission or Commissioners have time to review your input. Find out when the Planning Commission is meeting next at: <http://www.okanogancounty.org/planning/>
5. **Access Available Resources** – We don't have to reinvent the wheel! Great resources developed by other communities throughout the State are at our fingertips thanks to a couple of great on-line sites. Check out:
 - **Municipal Research Services Center:** www.mrsc.org
 - **Washington State Planning Short Course:** <http://www.commerce.wa.gov/site/395/default.aspx>
 - **State Department of Commerce Publications:** <http://www.commerce.wa.gov/site/395/default.aspx>

Please also feel free to contact Executive Director Jason Paulsen here at our office at (509) 996-2870 if you have additional questions that he can assist with.