

MEMORANDUM

Date: August 10, 2020
Date Prepared: August 5, 2020
To: Walla Walla County Board of County Commissioners
From: LDC, Inc
RE: Burbank UGA Residential Density, Comprehensive Plan and Code Amendments – Public Outreach

BACKGROUND

After the public hearing at the July 27, 2020 Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) meeting to renew Ordinance No. 471 (and subsequent) limiting all residential density in the Burbank Residential (BR) zoning district to no more than four (4) units an acre (Docket No. ZCA 18-002), the BOCC voted to renew the ordinance, effectively adopting Ordinance 484, which extends the status quo in the BR zoning district until January 27, 2021.

In addition to BOCC and Planning Commission meetings, and broad dissemination of information via physical notices, the County’s website, emails, or other digital formats, the Walla Walla County Code (WWCC) requires at least one informational public meeting be held to allow for public input on proposed Comprehensive Plan and development regulations amendments.

WWCC 14.10.050 - Public participation—Purpose and basic elements.

A. Purpose. The public participation process set forth in this chapter is intended to solicit from the public and outside agencies proposed amendments to the comprehensive plan and to provide an opportunity for public comment on proposed amendments. This purpose is achieved by broad dissemination of proposed amendments, opportunity for written comments, public meetings after effective notice, provisions for open discussion, and consideration of public comments.

B. Basic Elements. The county shall provide for early and continuous public participation in the amendment of the comprehensive plan. At a minimum public participation shall include the following elements:

1. Broad dissemination of the schedule adopted pursuant to Section 14.10.015B, proposed amendments, and meeting notices. Methods may include, but are not limited to use of the following: notice in a publication of general circulation and other appropriate publications; news media notification; mailed notice to property owners whose property is directly affected; posting on the internet; and displays in public facilities; and
2. At least one informational public meeting [emphasis added]; and

3. Public notice of all comprehensive plan related workshop meetings, public hearings, and other meetings of the planning commission and board of county commissioners; and
4. Availability of all proposed amendments and amendment applications for that year in the community development department during normal business hours.

COVID-19 RESTRICTONS & PUBLIC OUTREACH

Typically, public outreach would be conducted, and was anticipated for this project, through in-person public meetings. County staff planned that at least one public meeting would be held at one of the Columbia School District schools located in Burbank. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and Governor Jay Inslee's state of emergency declaration (issued February 29, 2020), which remains in effect, holding in-person public meetings are not possible at this time. As of the date of this writing, Walla Walla County remains in Phase 2 of the Safe Start Washington phased re-opening plan issued by the Governor's office. As required under Phase 2, public gatherings are restricted to no more than five (5) people outside your household. Therefore, County staff is limited in its methods to hold public meetings, which essentially leaves all public meetings to be held virtually at this time.

LDC, Inc. has been contracted to work with County staff to provide assistance throughout the Burbank UGA residential density, Comprehensive Plan and code amendments project, including providing support for public outreach. In addition to the County's Webex platform, LDC has the capability to host and facilitate public meetings virtually through similar online platforms (Zoom, GoToMeeting, etc.). Additionally, these online platforms enable the use of [video breakout rooms](#) which allow meeting participants to have discussions in separate video chat rooms and will allow the County to better manage public engagement and feedback. Depending on the number of participants attending the meeting, these virtual rooms may host approximately 15 - 20 people each.

While LDC, Inc recognizes that a virtual meeting method is neither ideal nor feasible for some County residents, virtual meetings are being hundreds of jurisdictions across the state of Washington just as they are in Walla Walla County. Should the BOCC wish to continue moving this project forward while meeting social distancing requirements, the following public outreach measures could be considered. Some of these will require additional cost and all of them are primarily reliant on virtual technology. Once the County determines how to proceed, the details of the public participation plan should be broadly disseminated to the public.

1. Hold public meetings virtually through online meeting portals (i.e. [Webex](#), [Zoom](#), [GoToMeeting](#)).
2. Assuming meetings will attract 20 or more participants, provide [video breakout rooms](#) to better manage and facilitate discussion.
3. Continue to provide project updates and documents for review through the County website. If necessary, create an additional project landing page that provides opportunity for additional engagement (i.e. [Konveio](#), [ArcStorymaps](#)).
4. Provide presentations online for members of the public to view prior to providing written comments.

5. Develop a small number of amendment options for consideration in final public hearings and distribute detailed information about the proposed amendments so that the public can review them and provide written comments in advance of PC and BOCC meetings.
6. Continue to provide project updates and documents to County residents and participants who have provided feedback via email or at previous meetings, or sign-up on an email list to receive up-to-date project information. If requested, materials may also be sent via USPS mail.