



Open House Summary

Date: March 20, 2024, 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm

Location: La Center City Hall; 210 E 4th Street, La Center, WA

Overview

The City of La Center hosted an open house at City Hall to share information about the Comprehensive Plan update and the Downtown and Timmen Landing Subarea Plans. Approximately 40 community members attended the open house, in addition to several City staff and elected officials. The main Council Chambers was set up to focus on the Comprehensive Plan update. Here, the project team shared information about existing conditions, the overall 2045 vision for La Center, and two land use scenarios to consider. Land use Scenario A is to upzone land from low to medium density within La Center and expand the Urban Growth Area (UGA) at the I-5 Junction for employment. Land use Scenario B is to limit rezoning within La Center and expand the UGA at the I-5 Junction for high-density residential and employment.

A second conference room was set up to focus on the subarea planning effort with project updates boards that featured existing conditions and draft vision statements for both subarea plans. The project team let attendees know that an online survey is available on the City's website to solicit additional input on the draft vision statements for the Downtown and Timmen Landing Subareas. Key themes heard about the Subarea Plans and Comprehensive Plan update are summarized below based on written feedback and conversations individuals had with the project team.

Comprehensive Plan Update

In general, community members expressed conflicting opinions about development for the future of La Center. Some people were supportive of new growth, especially considering the potential for economic development and future job growth, while others were overtly opposed to development and said the City needs to stop growth and limit higher density development. Community members commented that growth should be maintained within the existing Urban Growth Area, or that residential growth should occur with expansion at the I-5 Junction. A few people preferred land use Scenario B that proposes a UGA expansion to accommodate growth.

Some community members suggested improvements for recreational facilities. A few people commented that there should be improved signage for boat launches, as well as improved water trail and hiking trail maps. Several people commented that the trails should be more well-connected and maintained. A few people felt that all City trails should be paved.

Community members discussed their concerns about existing traffic, especially about traffic across the East Fork Lewis River bridge, the gateway into downtown La Center. A few people also shared their concerns about community safety and suggested improving police response time.

Subarea Plans

Timmen Landing

Several community members expressed concern about the impacts of development in Timmen Landing. A few people specifically commented on environmental concerns in anticipation of impacts to the river from future development in Timmen Landing. Community members commented that the City should preserve existing natural spaces.

Some attendees said they understand the importance of housing development and that the City should be mindful in planning for growth in the area. Balancing housing and commercial development in Timmen Landing is a priority for the community.



Figure 1. Community members discussing existing conditions in the Downtown and Timmen Landing Subareas

Community members said there should be more river access at Timmen Landing and Pollock Park. A few people suggested additional river-front development to bring activity to the area.

Downtown Subarea

Community members frequently commented that the Downtown Subarea Plan should prioritize refreshing and updating the façades of downtown buildings while still maintaining the small-town feel. Maintaining a consistent character throughout downtown is a community priority. A few people suggested having an overall design theme for downtown and emphasized the importance of La Center's history (e.g., sternwheeler steamboats).

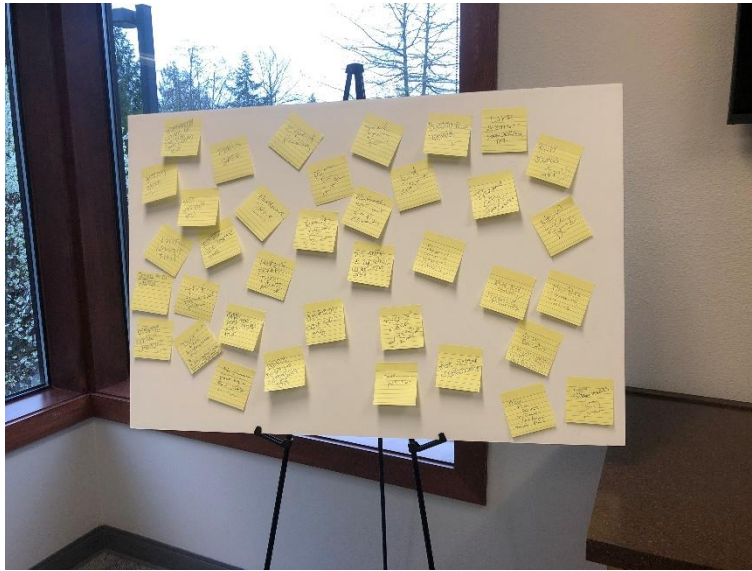


Figure 2. Comments in Response to Subarea Vision Statements

Some community members said that improving traffic flow and access to downtown is a priority for the future. A few people commented that there should be expanded parking in downtown. Community members had conflicting opinions about the future of Breeze Creek Trail as some people were supporting paving the trail while others commented that the trail should not be paved. However, community members seemed to agree that additional work is needed to connect the trail system through downtown.

Planning for appropriate-scaled development is a priority for the Downtown Subarea. Some community members said there is a need for a grocery store in La Center and a few others said that there is a need for a local hardware store. Additionally, community members said that they would like to see more dining and food options in downtown. Additional comments included:

- The City should consider bus traffic at the high school because buses are often not able to turn out of the school at peak travel times;
- Develop an auditorium or indoor event space; and
- There should be more youth-oriented spaces.

Next Steps

As noted above, an online survey for the Subarea Plans is available on the [City's website](#) to solicit input; the survey will be open for 30 days until April 20, 2024. Community feedback heard at the open house and through the online survey will be used to inform the Comprehensive Plan and Subarea Plans as they move into the land use alternatives development task.