Goal 1
Citizen Involvement

The residents of Benton County seek to create and sustain responsive government agencies that offer meaningful opportunities for public service and effective participation in policy and decision-making.

Benton County Comprehensive Plan Value Statement

Goal 1
Citizen Involvement

Overview

Citizen involvement is a critical component of effective land use planning. This is reflected in the fact that it is Goal 1 in the statewide planning program. The policies in this chapter outline a structure that assures citizens have the opportunity to be involved in all phases of the planning process. Opportunities for participation are provided for individuals, organizations and various citizen committees. Further, the policies provide for regular evaluation of the citizen involvement program, and for educational materials that promote a better understanding and more meaningful involvement in county affairs.

In developing these policies, the Steering Committee reviewed the original bylaws, standards and procedures of Citizen Advisory Committees and considered several options for the structure of citizen committees.

Wren Citizen Advisory Committee

Historical Perspective

Public participation has long been important to both the citizens and policymakers of Benton County. In 1972, Benton County's commissioners established thirteen Citizen Advisory Committees to represent the interests of designated geographic areas of the county. Five community members were appointed to each of these committees and were charged with the task of working with County staff to prepare recommendations of policies and zoning for the 1980 Comprehensive Plan. The committees were also given the opportunity to review and comment on land use issues considered by the Planning Commission that impacted their area. County staff provided support to these committees for recordkeeping, mailings and technical assistance.

By the early 1990's, the active Citizen Advisory Committees had dwindled to only those representing Wren, Alsea and North Benton County.

The current policies reflect a renewed interest by Benton County to engage its citizens in meaningful ways.

Goal 1

Statewide Planning Goal 1

To develop a citizen involvement program that insures the opportunity for citizens to be involved in all phases of the planning process.

The governing body charged with preparing and adopting a comprehensive plan shall adopt and publicize a program for citizen involvement that clearly defines the procedures by which the general public will be involved in the on-going land use planning process.

Excerpt from
OAR 660-015-0000(1)

Cross-Reference

Additional policies related to this goal:

Goal 2 Land Use Planning

Defined Terms

- Citizen Advisory Committee
- Committee for Citizen Involvement

See **Appendix** for definitions

Benton County Goal

Citizen Involvement

To ensure opportunities for citizens to be involved in the development of public policies and all phases of the planning process.

Alsea Citizen Advisory Committee – Community Meeting

Policies

1.1.1 Benton County shall have a Committee for Citizen Involvement (CCI) with membership that includes representation from Citizen Advisory Committees, other boards, committees, and commissions, and members at large. The CCI shall be appointed by and report to the Board of Commissioners and shall meet at least twice a year to evaluate citizen involvement activities and to develop and implement an annual action plan. The County shall provide staff support to the CCI.

1.1.2 Benton County shall encourage both self-organized and County-organized community oriented Citizen Advisory Committees (CAC) and promote their formation. The Committees shall be structured and operated according to County established guidelines and shall be officially recognized by the County. The County shall provide staff support and incentives to the CAC's.

1.1.3 Benton County shall seek input from County appointed Boards and Committees, local organizations, and individual citizens, and shall strive to refine procedures, improve communication, and respond to citizen concerns.

1.1.4 Benton County shall develop educational materials to promote a better understanding of County government and to encourage citizen involvement.

1.1.5 Benton County shall maintain and periodically review guidelines for Citizen Advisory Committees.

1.1 General Policies

County Boards & Committees

- Citizen Advisory Committees
- Benton County Planning Commission

Goal 1

Findings and References

1.1.a Benton County established 13 Citizen Advisory Committees (CAC's) in 1972, each consisting of 5 members. Today only the Alsea and Wren CAC's are active. The existing policy from this section addresses the need to continue to utilize CAC's, while providing some financial support and staff support.

1.1.b Continued public awareness of and citizen participation in the ongoing planning process is essential to responsible decisions which recognize public concerns and priorities.

1.1.c Potential CAC's include: Wren, Alsea, North Benton, South Benton, Alpine-Bellfountain, Soap Creek, Blodgett-Summit, and Kings Valley.

1.1.d Benton County established a Committee for Citizen Involvement in 1979, made up of members appointed by the CAC's plus a Planning Commission delegate. The existing policy from this section addresses the need for this committee to implement and evaluate the County's citizen involvement program.

1.1.e Citizen Advisory Committees provide a vital link between County government and it's citizenry.

1.1.f The residents of Benton County seek to create and sustain responsive government agencies that offer meaningful opportunities for public service and effective participation in policy and decision-making.

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1.1.g Many residents do not understand how County land use decisions are made and would benefit if educational materials were available.

References

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Benton County. *Background Information: Summary of Conclusions Prepared by 13 Citizen Advisory Committees*. Benton County Comprehensive Plan. 1978.

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