

# INTRODUCTION

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## **Benton County Mission**

**Making Benton County a better place to live.**

**Benton County Government brings to its citizenry the authority, structure, and services to respond to public concerns and opportunities and provide a means for local decision-making.**

# INTRODUCTION

The Comprehensive Plan is the official policy guide for decisions about growth, development, services, and resource management in Benton County – outside of incorporated cities. The policies of the Comprehensive Plan serve as the basis for developing the implementing regulations of the Development Code. The policies of the Comprehensive Plan are not in themselves implementing regulations and are not applied to individual applications except as provided by the Development Code.

The Comprehensive Plan is based on the physical, economic and social characteristics of the county; the desires and needs of county citizens, state laws, and programs and policies of other local, state, and federal governmental agencies. Overall, the Plan is intended to provide a framework for consistent and coordinated public and private land use decisions.

The policies in the Comprehensive Plan involve a commitment by the County to responsible management of the county's land use and resources. The policies are implemented by a variety of tools including the Benton County Development Code, the Urban Fringe Management Agreements, Area Plans (such as the North Corvallis Plan), and other plans and projects.

The plan before you, while an update of the previous Comprehensive Plan (effective July 2, 1982) is essentially a new document. Some of the original policies have been retained or revised, and some of the original background information has been used. However, the value statements, the Benton County goals, and most of the policies and findings are new – developed during the 2004-2006 update. This plan replaces the previously adopted Comprehensive Plan, and is effective March 22, 2007.

## Related Documents

- Benton County Strategic Plan
- Comprehensive Plans of the Cities of Adair Village, Albany, Corvallis, Monroe, and Philomath
- North Corvallis Plan
- Corvallis Area Metropolitan Transportation Plan: Destination 2030



Planning Commission Work Session

# INTRODUCTION

## History of Planning in Benton County

The Planning Commission is a volunteer body appointed by the Benton County Board of Commissioners to make land use decisions and provide policy direction regarding land use in Benton County. The Planning Commission is established pursuant to ORS 215.020 and 215.030, and consists of nine members. The Commission's duties, which are specified in the Development Code, include making recommendations to the Board of Commissioners on amendments to the Comprehensive Plan text and map, the Development Code, and the Zoning Map, and hearing appeals of land use decisions made by the Planning Official. All actions of the Planning Commission occur through public meetings.

Benton County's planning program began in the mid-1960s with the appointment of a Planning Commission. A land use plan was developed for the Philomath, Corvallis and North Albany areas, and the northern portion of the county. Zoning was adopted in 1968 by a county-wide public vote and was administered through a contract with the City of Corvallis.

In 1970, following the passage of legislation mandating local planning, the Board of Commissioners established the County Planning Department. Thirteen Citizen Advisory Committees were established throughout the county to promote citizen input on the development of a Comprehensive Plan. Over the next several years, staff, citizen committees and public officials worked together to develop the Plan. After 40 public hearings held throughout the county, the first Benton County Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1974.

Changing laws and public needs prompted an update to the Plan in 1978, and again in 1980. In addition to the type of information included in the earlier Plans, the 1980 Plan was designed to comply with the Statewide Planning Goals. Several subsequent amendments were necessary to establish compliance. In 1987, the Comprehensive Plan was acknowledged by the State as complying with the Statewide Planning Goals. More information about the Statewide Planning Goals can be found on the following pages.

The Oregon Statewide Planning Program requires local jurisdictions to update their plans from time to time, to reflect changing conditions and changes in state laws. This process is called "periodic review". Benton County's most recent update of the Comprehensive Plan through periodic review was conducted between 1990 and 1992.

The process to conduct this most recent revision of the Benton County Comprehensive Plan began in the Fall of 2001. The Planning Commission formed four subcommittees, each subcommittee evaluated specific Plan elements. Through that process, policy revisions were recommended. However, it was not until 2004, that the County budgeted funds necessary for a complete review process to be undertaken. This process included hiring a consultant and facilitator and forming a steering committee. After more than two years of work by the Steering Committee, Planning Commission, citizens, staff, consultants and public officials, the Plan received further citizen input at public hearings prior to its adoption by the Board of County Commissioners.

## Legal Framework

Senate Bill 100 (ORS 197), which was adopted in 1973 and later amended in 2003, substantially altered the legal framework for planning in Oregon. This state law requires that cities and counties adopt comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances that meet statewide goals and guidelines. ORS 197 is implemented through the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC).

Specifically, ORS 197.175 requires that:

“...each city and county in this state shall:

(a) Prepare, adopt, amend and revise comprehensive plans in compliance with goals approved by the commission;

(b) Enact land use regulations to implement their comprehensive plans;

(c) If its comprehensive plan and land use regulations have not been acknowledged by the commission, make land use decisions and limited land use decisions in compliance with the goals;

(d) If its comprehensive plan and land use regulations have been acknowledged by the commission, make land use decisions and limited land use decisions in compliance with the acknowledged plan and land use regulations; and

(e) Make land use decisions and limited land use decisions subject to an unacknowledged amendment to a comprehensive plan or land use regulation in compliance with those land use goals applicable to the amendment.”

State law also requires, under ORS 195.025, that “...each county, through its governing body, shall be responsible for coordinating all planning activities affecting land uses within the county, including planning activities of the county, cities, special districts and state agencies, to assure an integrated comprehensive plan for the entire area of the county”.

# INTRODUCTION

## Statewide Planning Goals

The Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) adopted the Statewide Planning Goals to provide a legal framework for local land use planning.

See ORS 197.175 on previous page.

**Note:**

Statewide Planning Goals 16-19 pertain only to coastal areas.

- Goal 1 Citizen Involvement:** To develop a citizen involvement program that insures the opportunity for citizens to be involved in all phases of the planning process.
- Goal 2 Land Use Planning:** To establish a land use planning process and policy framework as a basis for all decisions and actions related to use of land and to assure an adequate factual base for such decisions and actions.
- Goal 3 Agricultural Lands:** To preserve and maintain agricultural lands.
- Goal 4 Forest Lands:** To conserve forest lands by maintaining the forest land base and to protect the state’s forest economy by making possible economically efficient forest practices that assure the continuous growing and harvesting of forest tree species as the leading use on forest land consistent with sound management of soil, air, water, and fish and wildlife resources and to provide for recreational opportunities and agriculture.
- Goal 5 Natural Resources, Scenic and Historic Areas, and Open Spaces:** To protect natural resources and conserve scenic and historic areas and open spaces.
- Goal 6 Air, Water and Land Resources Quality:** To maintain and improve the quality of the air, water and land resources of the state.
- Goal 7 Areas Subject to Natural Hazards:** To protect people and property from natural hazards.
- Goal 8 Recreational Needs:** To satisfy the recreational needs of the citizens of the state and visitors and, where appropriate, to provide for the siting of necessary recreational facilities including destination resorts.
- Goal 9 Economic Development:** To provide adequate opportunities throughout the state for a variety of economic activities vital to the health, welfare, and prosperity of Oregon’s citizens.
- Goal 10 Housing:** To provide for the housing needs of citizens of the state.
- Goal 11 Public Facilities and Services:** To plan and develop a timely, orderly and efficient arrangement of public facilities and services to serve as a framework for urban and rural development.
- Goal 12 Transportation:** To provide and encourage a safe, convenient and economic transportation system.
- Goal 13 Energy Conservation:** To conserve energy.
- Goal 14 Urbanization:** To provide for an orderly and efficient transition from rural to urban land use, to accommodate urban population and urban employment inside urban growth boundaries, to ensure efficient use of land, and to provide for livable communities.
- Goal 15 Willamette Greenway:** To protect, conserve, enhance and maintain the natural, scenic, historical, agricultural, economic and recreational qualities of lands along the Willamette River as the Willamette River Greenway.

## Components of the Plan

### **Oregon's Statewide Planning Goals**

This Benton County Comprehensive Plan is structured to reflect Oregon's Statewide Planning Goals. The Statewide Planning Goals were developed in 1973 and express the State's policies on land use and related topics, such as citizen involvement, housing and natural resources. Oregon's statewide goals are achieved through local comprehensive planning. State law requires each city and county to adopt a comprehensive plan and the zoning and land-division ordinances needed to put the plan into effect. Local comprehensive plans must be consistent with the statewide planning goals and are reviewed by Oregon's Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) to assure this consistency. When LCDC officially approves a local government's plan, the plan is said to be "acknowledged". Benton County's Comprehensive Plan was originally acknowledged by LCDC on February 5, 1987.

### **Value Statements**

The Comprehensive Plan Value Statements articulate important community values that provide guidance throughout the development and implementation of County goals and policies. The initial draft of the Value Statements was developed through public meetings in the fall of 2003 and February 2004. The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee clarified wording to produce the final recommended version.

### **Benton County's Goals**

Fifteen of Oregon's 19 Statewide Planning Goals relate to Benton County. Benton County's goals are consistent with Oregon's goals and are a statement of the outcome toward which local efforts are being directed; they are a vision of a preferred future. While reflecting the Statewide Planning Goals, Benton County's goals respond to the physical, economic and social characteristics of the county.

The compartmentalization of issues and policies into categories based on the fifteen applicable Statewide Planning Goals, in some ways conflicts with the integrated nature of land use concerns. While working within the goal-based structure, Benton County nonetheless attempts to approach land use management and planning from a holistic perspective. To that end, we have provided cross-referencing to related policies of other goal chapters.

# INTRODUCTION

## Components of the Plan

The **Comprehensive Plan Map** can be found in Chapter 16 – Additional Adopted Documentation.

The **Comprehensive Plan Map** and **Zoning Map** are available at the Benton County Community Development Department office.

### Policies

The policies of the County’s Comprehensive Plan provide the framework – the principles and guidelines – for consistent decision making that will lead the County in a strategic direction toward accomplishing its stated goals. The policies respond to the findings, issues and areas of concern that were identified throughout the development of the Plan. The policies of the Comprehensive Plan are adopted by ordinance and have the force of law. However, the policies are directly applicable only to certain types of land use decisions, such as zone changes and legislative amendments. For land use applications such as conditional uses and subdivisions, it is the Development Code – the codified form of the Comprehensive Plan – that applies. In addition to the policies contained in this document, the County has adopted a set of policies that pertain only to the Corvallis Urban Fringe. These are contained in a separate document referenced in Chapter 16 of this plan.

### Findings & References

As the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan were developed, a great deal of research took place that establishes the basis for the Plan. Official reports were reviewed, agencies and organizations were consulted, and County staff provided comment during the development of goal and policy recommendations. In addition, the background reports prepared during the development of the Plan in 1979 continue to provide reference for review and update of the Comprehensive Plan. A variety of mapped data also provides background for the Plan, including agricultural capability class, forest site class, slope, tax districts, geology, flood plain and tax deferral status. This research is documented in the form of findings and references and is cited at the end of each goal chapter of the Plan.

### Maps

The Comprehensive Plan Map defines and locates primary land use designations within the unincorporated portions of Benton County, including agricultural, forest, rural residential, commercial, industrial, and significant public lands. The land use designations apply County and State goals and policies to the landscape and provide the basis for decisions regarding future land use activities in Benton County. Within urban growth boundaries, the Comprehensive Plan Map is jointly developed and adopted by Benton County and the corresponding city.

The Zoning Map further defines permitted land uses within primary zones that are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Map designations. The Zoning Map is adopted within the Development Code.

## Components of the Plan

### **Additional Adopted Documents**

There are several separate documents that are adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan. These documents have status equivalent to the Comprehensive Plan document, and include such things as the Comprehensive Plan Map, the goal exception document, and inventories of Goal 5 resources. All documents adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan are referenced and summarized in Chapter 16.

### **Definitions**

Definitions of terms used in the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies that require explanation may be found in the appendix of this document. A list of defined words used within each goal chapter is provided within the respective chapter.

### **Implementation**

The policies of the Comprehensive Plan serve as the basis for the implementing regulations of the Development Code. The Development Code sets out the review criteria, land development and design standards, and administrative procedures for application of the policies to land use decisions within the county.

While the Development Code provides the regulatory basis for implementing land use actions, many other activities of the County provide critical support to the implementation of the policies. Other County plans, such as the Natural Areas and Parks Plan, the Pre-Disaster and Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan, and the Historic Context Statement are instrumental to policy implementation. Citizen groups, such as Citizen Advisory Committees, the Historic Resource Commission and the Solid Waste Advisory Committee are influential in achieving policy directives. In addition, the strategic work plans of County departments reflect the overall direction provided within the Comprehensive Plan.

The **Benton County Development Code** can be found at the Community Development Department office.

# INTRODUCTION

## Plan Development Process

The adoption of this County Comprehensive Plan is the culmination of an intensive public process that occurred over a period of more than two years. The process attempted to capture the spirit and intent of the citizens of the county, to thoroughly consider the current issues and opportunities and to reflect the values of county residents. It was designed to provide a local context for the Statewide Planning Goals and to translate that into goals and policies that will serve as the framework for local decision making.

### Draft Comprehensive Plan Value Statement

In the fall of 2003, the Board of Commissioners, the Planning Commission and representatives of various advisory groups met together to consider core values to uphold in the Comprehensive Plan. Discussions generated a draft Comprehensive Plan Value Statement.

### Public Kickoff Meeting

A public open house was held to launch the Plan update process in February 2004. The meeting was attended by a County Commissioner, Planning Commission members, County staff, Citizen Advisory Committee members and many members of the general public. Attendees identified issues and concerns to be considered in updating the Plan. The Draft Comprehensive Plan Value Statement was reviewed and suggestions were made of additional important values.



### Steering Committee Appointed

The Board of Commissioners appointed a nine-member steering committee comprised of Planning Commission members, members of County committees and citizens-at-large. The steering committee was established to represent county residents' interests and values, to participate in the entire update process and to recommend goals and policies for review by the Planning Commission.



### Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

Made up of staff from Benton County Community Development, Public Works, and Natural Areas & Parks Departments, the TAC provided input and advice throughout the process of drafting the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan. The TAC consulted with outside experts and staff from other departments, as needed.



## Plan Development Process

### **Research and Information Gathering**

County staff, with the assistance of a consultant, gathered information about the Statewide Planning Goals, statutes, rules and amendments pertinent to county planning. The original background reports of the 1979 Comprehensive Plan were reviewed to identify current information. Additional background information was assembled from official reports, agencies and organizations, and County staff to prepare preliminary background and findings.

### **Public Outreach Meetings**

Public outreach meetings were hosted by Citizen Advisory Committees in the rural communities of Alsea and Wren during the Spring of 2004. Citizens were invited to respond to the value statement and to identify the critical issues and interests of their communities.

### **Outreach to Board-Appointed Groups and Committees**

Staff met with several County committees, including the Historic Resource Commission, Environmental Issues Advisory Committee, Roads Advisory Committee, Solid Waste Advisory Committee, and Parks Advisory Board to introduce the Plan update. Committee members were asked to identify current goals and policies from existing plans and documents that could be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan. Discussions identified policy issues of particular relevance to each committee.

### **Synthesizing, Reporting, Framing**

Reports of findings, policy issues, draft goals and policies were prepared by a consultant under the advice of the Technical Advisory Committee. These reports were presented to the steering committee for review and discussion.

### **Steering Committee Recommends Goals and Policies to Planning Commission**

Beginning in March of 2004, the steering committee met monthly for two years, reviewed background information and reached consensus agreement on a set of recommended goals and policies. The steering committee recommendations were presented to the Planning Commission for consideration. The Planning Commission approved the draft goals and policies to present to the public for comment.



# INTRODUCTION

## Plan Development Process

### Comprehensive Plan Public Outreach

Alsea Public Open House  
Themes and Comments. 15  
April 2004.

Benton County Park and  
Open Space: Themes and  
Issues.

Benton County Public  
Comments. Public Kick-Off  
and Open House Meeting.  
25 February 2004.

Benton County Value  
Statement Themes. Public  
Kick-Off and Open House  
Meeting. 25 February 2004.

Bicycle Advisory Committee  
Input. 11 March 2004.

Environmental Issues  
Advisory Committee Input.  
18 March 2004.

Historic Resources  
Committee Draft Issues and  
Policy Statements. 2004.

### Public Hearings and Adoption of the Plan

A draft of the Plan was printed in June, 2006 for public review. The Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on August 1, 2006. After hearing public testimony, the Planning Commission forwarded a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners that the Plan be adopted, with specific modifications.

The Board of County Commissioners conducted its first public hearing on October 24, 2006 and continued the public hearing on December 12, 2006. At the continued public hearing the Board of Commissioners, upon consideration of the entire public record, voted 3-0 to approve the Plan with modifications. The Board directed staff to prepare a final version of the document along with findings of fact, conclusions of law, and order to demonstrate that the document complies with all applicable Statewide Planning Goals as set forth in Oregon Revised Statutes, Chapter 197 and Oregon Administrative Rule 660 Division 022 (Statewide Goals 1-5); and Benton County Comprehensive Plan Chapter IV, *Monitoring the Plan*.

The Board of Commissioners conducted a first reading of Ordinance No. 2007-0170 on February 6, 2007 and a second reading on February 20, 2007. The Plan became effective on March 22, 2007.



Benton County Board of Commissioners

# INTRODUCTION

## Using the Plan

In simple terms, the Comprehensive Plan is a tool for dealing with change. It can be used in multiple ways, including:

1. As a basis for the development of public programs and regulations, e.g., capital budgets for schools, parks, streets and sewers; zoning regulations; land division regulations; etc.
2. To guide public decisions on land use changes as reviewed through implementing regulations such as zoning and land division ordinances, such as the Development Code.
3. As a basis for the measurement and evaluation of changes in the physical, social or economic makeup of the county. Modifications of the Plan itself may result from this process.
4. To promote intergovernmental coordination.
5. To strengthen communications with the public.
6. As a basis for private decision-making regarding the nature and timing of land development and conservation activities.

## Future Updates

In order to keep pace with changing needs, the best of plans needs to be updated and amended periodically. This includes revising the data base and re-evaluating the policies. The State calls for a periodic review to ensure the plan stays current with changes in State statutes and rules. The entire plan should be updated at least every 20 years (Benton County Comprehensive Plan Policy 2.1.1). All Plan update processes take place with the benefit of a full range of citizen involvement, including public hearings before the Benton County Planning Commission and the Board of Commissioners.

The procedures for amending the Comprehensive Plan are outlined in Chapter 17.

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# VALUE STATEMENTS

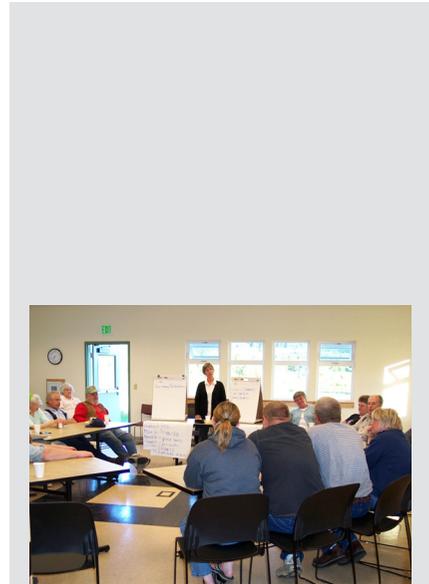
## Background

The Benton County Comprehensive Plan Value Statements provide an overall framework for planning to ensure that the values and visions of the county's citizens are supported through planning efforts. The Value Statements were developed through a citizen participation process that initiated the overall 2003-06 Plan review.

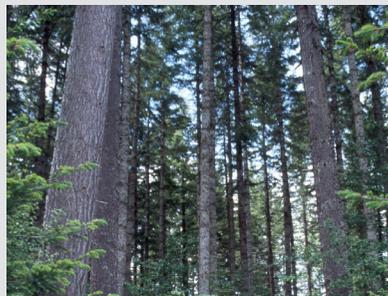
In Fall of 2003, a meeting was held with the Board of Commissioners, the Planning Commission, and representatives from County advisory groups. A

ttendees were asked to complete the following sentence: "Above all else, the residents of Benton County value...". From this input, draft value statements were developed to define the core values of county residents and a vision for a preferred future.

County citizens provided comments on the draft Value Statements at a public meeting on February 25, 2004. These were presented to the Citizen Steering Committee, who provided clarifications and recommended the Value Statements to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission recommended adoption of the Value Statements by the Board of Commissioners, who, after public hearings, adopted the Value Statements for the Comprehensive Plan.



# VALUE STATEMENTS



## Residents of Benton County value

### **The land – its beauty and life-sustaining qualities**

Agricultural and forest lands provide sustenance for residents of the Willamette Valley. These lands and the larger systems of mountains, valleys, rivers and wetlands of which they are part continue to be highly prized economically, culturally, recreationally, environmentally and aesthetically.

### **Maintenance of rural character**

The residents of Benton County value the rural character that still exists in much of the county, the distinction that has been maintained between settlement areas and resource lands and open spaces, and the manageable scale of the cities, towns, and rural centers.

### **A healthy environment**

The residents of Benton County value clean air, water and healthy natural systems and recognize their importance in sustaining the quality of life that residents value for themselves, their children and grandchildren.

### **Economic security and opportunity**

The residents of Benton County recognize the importance of education and productive work and respect the rights and needs of individuals to pursue livelihoods of their choice that offer sufficient and sustainable material reward and personal satisfaction.

## Residents of Benton County value

### **Supportive human systems**

The residents of Benton County recognize the importance of nurturing and sustaining public infrastructure and human systems that address adequate and affordable food, shelter, transportation, education, health care, public safety, and other vital services.

### **Public and private interests**

The residents of Benton County recognize that their government exists to support the rights of individuals to pursue the lifestyles of their choice and at the same time to ensure that the pursuit of those individual dreams does not jeopardize the safety, security, opportunities and rights of others. Our residents recognize the importance and value of the demographic and cultural diversity present in Benton County. They expect that actions in the public interest will be cost effective and efficient and not place an undue burden on themselves or any segment of the community.

### **Engagement between citizens and government**

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.

### **Connection to place**

The residents of Benton County value this place they call home for its sense of history, sense of community and for its unique physical presence. The residents of Benton County value the capacity of this place to nurture and sustain in its residents a sense of belonging.



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