

Othello Housing Action Plan

Public Engagement Plan | October 2020

Project Overview

Othello's Housing Action Plan (HAP) will assess local housing needs and identify policy strategies and implementation actions to increase local housing supply. Increasing access to information and meaningfully including a diverse range of perspectives is fundamental to the creation of an equitable and community-driven HAP. The City is committed to equitable and inclusive community engagement throughout the process.

This Public Engagement Plan is a working document that identifies stakeholders, outreach techniques, and engagement options to increase community awareness and gather feedback throughout the planning process. This will inform housing policies that more accurately and equitably reflect the diverse values and needs of the community.

Given current conditions related to COVID-19, the City will adapt its engagement approach to comply with public health regulations while still ensuring development of the best HAP for Othello.

Project Purpose

Othello's Housing Action Plan (HAP) is an actionable policy document that outlines concrete steps the City and its partners can take to meet local housing needs. The HAP takes a comprehensive approach to leverage resources and previous planning efforts and implement cohesive, effective, and feasible housing strategies tailored to the Othello community. Its strategies are based on data and analysis vetted and grounded through an inclusive and robust public conversation.

Engagement Guiding Principles

The Public Engagement Plan was developed with the following guiding principles:

1. Public participation will be a meaningful and productive use of the community's time.
2. The City will incorporate ideas generated and opinions provided.
3. Public participation will be conducted in an equitable manner, where residents and workers in Othello have opportunity for their voices to be heard.
4. Public participation will lead to a Housing Action Plan that can be implemented. The plan will be created using input from a broad set of community members, connecting to the needs and lived experience of residents, and increasing the likelihood of positive support.

Demographic Context

The 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year estimates provide an initial understanding of Othello's resident population. As of 2018, approximately **7,980 people resided in Othello** and represent the following demographics:¹

- **Age:** Median age is 25.9, compared to 37.4 statewide.
 - 23.9% of residents are under the age of 10, compared to 12.5% statewide.
 - 8.5% of residents are aged 65 or older, compared to 14.7% statewide.
- **Citizenship and voting:** Of the resident population aged 18 or older, 64% are citizens.
- **Disability:** 11.7% of residents have a disability, slightly less than the statewide average of 12.7%.
- **Education:** 32.6% of residents aged 25 or older have less than a 9th grade education, compared to 3.7% statewide.
- **Income:** 27.2% of residents had family incomes below the poverty level within the prior 12 months.
- **Internet and computer access:** 78.7% of households have a computer and 67.1% of households have a broadband internet connection.
- **Language:** Of the population aged 5 years or older, 63% speak Spanish at home and 32.3% speak English only at home.
 - 38.5% speak English less than "very well."
- **Race and Hispanic/Latino Ethnicity:** Most residents (78.6%) are of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, compared to 12.5% statewide.
 - Nearly all Hispanic or Latino residents are Mexican, at 74% of the resident population.
 - Of the 21.4% of the resident population that identifies as not Hispanic or Latino, 19.0% identify as White alone.
 - Overall, 69.6% of residents identify as White regardless of Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity.

Potential Partners

Demographic	Focus Group	Potential Partners
Age	Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Othello School District ▪ Othello Boys and Girls Club (overseen by the Columbia Basin Boys and Girls Club) ▪ 4-H Youth Development through WSU Extension Adams County ▪ Saddle Mountain School (private)
Citizenship and voting	Non-citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adams County Auditor ▪ Othello Senior Center
Disability	People with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) ▪ Othello Senior Center ▪ Adams County Assessor ▪ Adams County Integrated Health

¹ Note that according to the Washington State Office of Financial Management, Othello's permanent city population was about 8,270 in 2018, growing incrementally to 8,515 in 2020. The 2018 American Community Survey estimate is discussed here due to the availability of demographic information.

Demographic	Focus Group	Potential Partners
Education	People with lower educational attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Big Bend Community College GED courses (available in Othello)
Income	People with low-income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Othello School District Mid-Columbia Libraries' Othello Branch (open for curbside pickup during COVID-19)
Internet and computer access	People without access to the internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Othello School District Othello Senior Center Mid-Columbia Libraries' Othello Branch (open for curbside pickup during COVID-19) City of Othello IT
Language	Spanish speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iglesia Adventista Hispana de Othello Sacred Heart Catholic Church Bethel Assembly of God
Race and Ethnicity	Hispanic and Latino people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> La Mexicana Supermarket Chuy's Carniceria Grocery/Laundromat

Other existing community-wide events to potentially partner with include:

- Christmas parade | December 2020
- Sandhill Crane Festival | March 2021

Engagement Plan Strategies

Note: All print and online materials (including the survey) will be available in both English and Spanish. City staff fluent in English and Spanish will be available for the public workshops and targeted interviews as needed.

Interested Parties List

Timeline: Initial development at start of the project, maintained and updated throughout

City staff will maintain a list of interested parties that will be used for electronic notification of engagement opportunities and project milestones. Participants who provide contact information to the City will be added to the list. The project team may also reach out to local organizations and trusted community leaders to distribute information to their constituents.

Project Website and Social Media

Timeline: Initial development at start of the project, maintained and updated throughout

The City will host a page on their website at <https://www.othellowa.gov/HousingActionPlan> that describes the Housing Action Plan, communicates current progress/major milestones, and provides a way for community members to send comments, feedback, or sign-up for future updates. Information about the plan will also be advertised via the City's social media platforms and other online accounts.

Online Housing Survey

Timeline: October/November 2020 (following the draft needs assessment and policy framework review) while developing the Draft HAP

Following the draft needs assessment and policy framework review, an online housing survey will be distributed to community members and specific individuals or organizations targeted for outreach – such as developers, service providers, and employers. Questions will be tailored to the general public (those that live and/or work in Othello) and to targeted stakeholder groups. The public will be notified in October through a combination of City listservs and the list of interested parties, City social media accounts, the project website, and a mailer with monthly utility bills.

Potential topics may include:

- Community members: Current housing conditions (e.g., type of housing, own or rent), housing challenges faced, desired housing types, and perceived community housing needs.
- Developers: Types of housing they develop (e.g., single family/duplex/multifamily, ownership or rental, market rate or subsidized affordable housing), and current barriers to developing housing that meets identified HAP goals and/or special needs populations as identified in the needs assessment.
- Service providers: Populations served, organization's role in addressing community or housing needs in Othello, and most common needs seen amongst population(s) served.
- Employers: Type of workforce and their housing needs, does housing affect their ability to recruit or retain workers, and housing types/options most suitable to their workforce.

Public Workshops

Timeline: Early 2021 following release of the Draft HAP

A half-day series of workshops will feature staffed informational stations with opportunities for the public to review materials, talk to the project team, and engage in interactive activities to provide feedback on local goals and objectives and collaboratively develop recommendations for action. The public will be notified through a combination of City listservs and the list of interested parties, City social media accounts, the project website, and a mailer with monthly utility bills.

Should social distancing continue to prevent in-person meetings from taking place, an online open house will be held and supplemented with online surveys and/or comment forms. The event can be recorded and made available for community members to watch at their convenience.

Potential discussion topics include:

- Feedback and interpretation of preliminary housing needs assessment, including any gaps.
- Insights regarding unique housing challenges for specific communities.
- Feedback on the acceptance or effectiveness of proposed housing strategies, including which strategies community members think will best address their specific housing issues.
- Ideas for strategies not in the draft plan.

Targeted Interviews

Timeline: Early 2021 following release of the Draft HAP

This strategy involves targeted one-on-one phone interviews with stakeholders around a set of established questions. Interviews provide the opportunity to learn about a subject in depth and reach communities unlikely to engage through other activities. Interviews are also an important tool to gather information on the design of engagement activities.

Potential discussion topics include:

- Identifying gaps in the needs assessment, including emerging trends, types of households with unique needs, barriers people are facing to accessing housing that meets their needs.
- Barriers faced by housing developers/providers that may be reducing the supply or diversity of housing coming to market.
- Insights regarding housing availability and affordability and related impacts on community wellbeing and access to opportunity.
- Review points raised during the online survey or workshops.
- Feedback on proposed strategies and actions, including: viability, market response, community response, anticipated barriers, potential partners, and potential advocates.
- Prioritization of strategies.
- Ideas for strategies not in the draft plan.

Timeline for Updates to Council

City Council meets the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Monday of every month. The Planning Commission will be engaged through as well, likely through joint meetings and targeted interviews. Below is a tentative schedule for updating Council throughout the HAP process.

- October 26, 2020 (joint Council and Planning Commission meeting): Present Draft Existing Conditions and Needs Analysis report.
- Early 2021 (likely January): Present potential supply and displacement strategies.
- March 2021: Draft HAP briefing.
- Spring 2021: Housing Action Plan Hearing and Adoption. To be adopted by June 15, 2021.