Lewis County 2045

Shaping the Future of Lewis County

Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update

Community Engagement Plan

Public Review Draft
April 2024

How to Comment

You may submit comments to the Lewis County Community Development staff on the Comprehensive Plan Update by:

Email: mindy.brooks@lewiscountywa.gov

U.S. Mail: Community Development, Planning Division 2025 NE Kresky Avenue Chehalis, WA 98532 Attention: Mindy Brooks

For more information visit:

tinyurl.com/LewisCounty2045

Executive Summary

Lewis County is preparing a Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update in accordance with the requirements of the Washington State Growth Management Act. The comprehensive plan is a document used by the County, created with input from the community, to establish a vision for the future. The vision will influence actions taken by the County over the next 20 years to manage land use, housing, transportation, economic development, and environmental conditions in the community.

Community engagement is the core of this Comprehensive Plan Periodic update, also called Lewis County 2045. Engagement with the community throughout this effort will help shape vision, goals and planning policy in Lewis County for the next 20 years. County staff will collect input from elected officials, Lewis County residents, business owners, stakeholders, and other governmental agencies and combine that with the best available data to assess conditions in the community. Community engagement in support of Lewis County 2045 will take place from April 2024 to November 2024. Staff will also present project progress updates at public meetings and hearings, such as the Board of County Commissioners and others throughout the project (Figure 1).

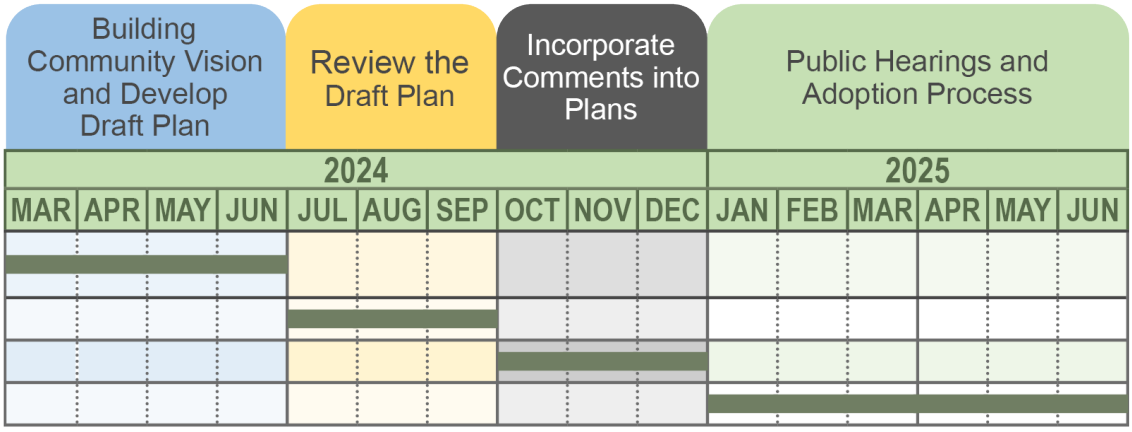

Figure 1 Engagement Schedule

This Community Engagement Plan will outline the approach and tools to inform, involve, and consult with members of the community. The purpose of community engagement is to understand diverse viewpoints and visions for the future. All County residents are encouraged to participate. Staff will use the results of engagement to update the plan.

Project Description

Lewis County 2045 is an opportunity for the community to review the current conditions, reevaluate goals, values and policy and look ahead to the next 20 years. Building on the existing comprehensive plan, the update will consider how the County will plan for people, jobs, housing, parks, transportation, and the infrastructure needed to support growth. The anticipated adoption of the updated comprehensive plan is June 30, 2025.

Lewis County 2045 will not only be an opportunity to meet the requirements of state law but to create a new community vision. Building a strong and defensible community vision based on continuous and accessible community engagement will allow for streamlined implementation of the comprehensive plan. This will help administrators, elected officials and agencies make informed decisions moving forward. Consistent with the County's Community Engagement Framework, the goal of the community engagement plan (CEP) is to describe how the community will be engaged and at what points specific tools will be used.

Promise to the Public

Community engagement takes many different forms and can be viewed as a spectrum ranging from informing the community about projects to fully collaborating with the community to develop the plan (see Figure 2). This CEP will employ a variety of engagement approaches to provide the community members the ability to select their preferred level of participation.

Figure 2 Lewis County Engagement Spectrum

The engagement tactics used for this effort will focus on informing, involving, and collaborating with stakeholders. The extent to which each stakeholder participates will depend on the stakeholders themselves.

County staff and consultants involved throughout this process will be mindful of the following engagement promises:

- Promise to inform: We will keep the community well informed from start to finish.
- Promise to involve: We will consult with specific stakeholders and make sure that their needs and concerns are directly reflected in the plan where possible.
- Promise to collaborate: We will gather advice and innovative ideas from the community and incorporate them into the plan's decisions to the maximum extent possible.

- Promise to circle back: We will share how feedback was used to demonstrate the importance of community engagement process. We will acknowledge people's time and participation after each activity (surveys, interviews, community meetings, etc.). The County and consultant team will summarize feedback and input gathered and make these engagement summaries available through the report titled Engagement Results on the project website.
- Promise to provide adequate public notice: We will inform the public of opportunities to participate in a timely manner, at least a week in advance of a meeting or activity where feedback is sought. When applicable, we will follow public notice requirements according to the rules of Washington Administrative Code (WAC 365-196-600). The County will consider the following notification channels to keep the community informed:
    - County website
    - Email
    - Public/commercial local radio
    - Posting on community boards
    - Utility notices and other city/County communication
    - Social Media
- Promise to be transparent: The Board of County Commissioners will have ultimate power of decision to adopt the plan. The public is invited to every meeting with the Board and may provide comments about the topics we are presenting. .

Interests and Impacts

The comprehensive planning process is complex, and it can be difficult to communicate the nexus between planning policy and changes which might impact the community as the plan is implemented.

Lewis County 2045 will focus technical work and community engagement on understanding concerns and opportunities in the following areas:

Growth

Residents and business owners may be impacted by population growth in the following ways: traffic and proposed transportation solutions, changes to density of housing, access to quality community services (e.g., police, school, internet), and impacts on public facilities (e.g., water districts.

Agricultural and Forestry Lands

People who own farms or forestry land may be concerned about how growth and development could impact the economic use of their property.

Housing

Existing and new residents may be interested in changes to housing regulations and how that may impact the housing choices in the future.

Critical Areas

Those who own property near identified critical areas regulated by the state (e.g., wetlands, streams, floodplains) may be concerned about impacts that would hinder their ability to use their property.

Hazard Mitigation

Those impacted by flooding, wildfire or other natural hazards may want to understand their risks and know what mitigation options will be considered to help them build resiliency over time.

Lewis County 2045 Roles and Responsibilities

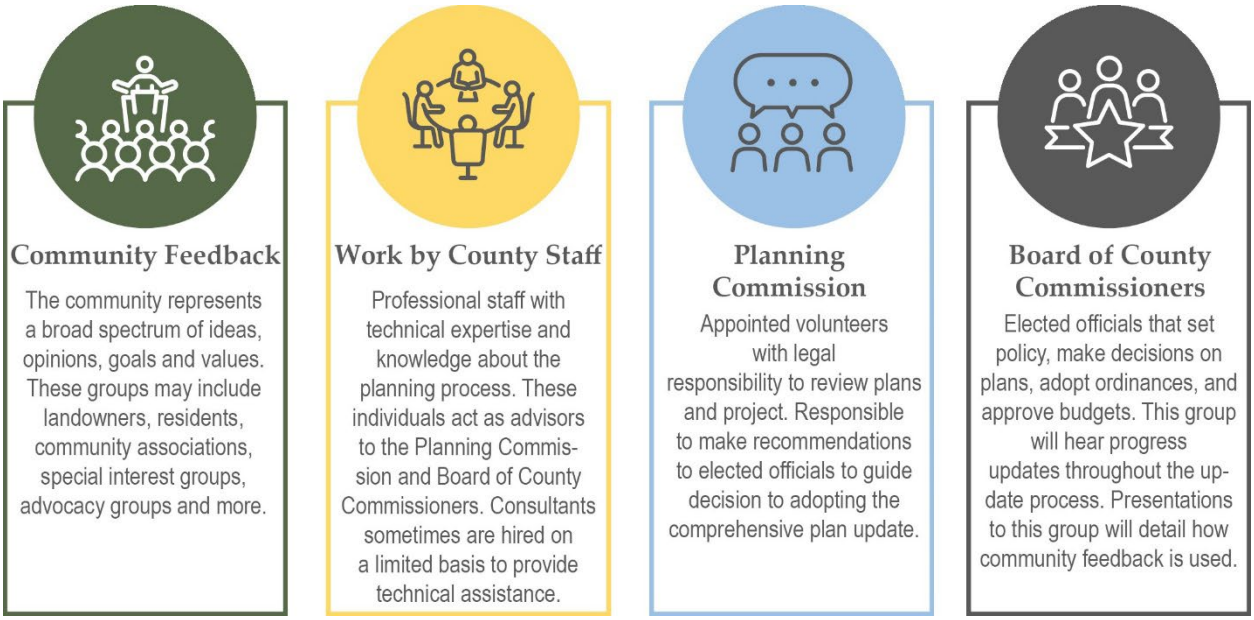

Figure 3 Roles and Responsibilities

Community Stakeholders

This section includes the types of stakeholders in Lewis County. A stakeholder is any individual who may have an interest in the future of Lewis County. Most stakeholders may fall into more than one group. All stakeholders are equally valuable to this process and the County desires to engage with community members from all areas. County staff are especially interested in hearing from stakeholders who have never participated in planning efforts, and those living in areas vulnerable to natural hazards.

This list is not comprehensive and may be updated as the project progresses.

Key stakeholder groups

- Property owners
- Residents
- Part Time Residents
- Renters
- Business owners
- Employees
- Elected officials (including County Commissioners)
- Developers
- Tribes
- People with Limited English Proficiency
- Communities with Disabilities
- Churches
- Schools and school districts
- Library
- Individual cities, towns, unincorporated communities
- Community organizations

- Fire Departments
- Police Departments
- Water/Sewer Districts
- Tourists/Visitors
- Agricultural industry
- Seniors
- Youth
- Students
- Religious organizations

Previous Engagement

This strategy will build on engagement work carried about by the County in the Winter of 2023-2024. The County held facilitated workshops with the goal of asking the community to help prioritize the most important topics to address during Lewis County 2045. Meetings were held in the following locations:

- **Salkum** - Salkum Timberland Library
- **Mineral**- Mineral American Legion Building
- **Toledo** - Cowlitz Prairie Grange
- **Randle** - Randle Fire Station

During the workshops, County staff asked attendees "What is your vision for Lewis County in 20-years?" The attendees identified priorities in several relevant topics. Meeting notes are available in a separate document titled "Engagement Results" which is available on the County website.

Key themes identified in the workshops include:

- Rural character
- Transportation
- Economic development
- Housing
- Infrastructure
- Critical areas
- Public health
- Natural hazards
- Recreation and tourism
- Forestry and farms
- Land use

This feedback, including all feedback gathered during the events and opportunities identified in this plan, will be shared with the Lewis County Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners to help staff inform Lewis County 2045.

Engagement Strategy

This engagement approach will prioritize making project details interesting, accessible, and relevant to the communities. This CEP aims to create a program for participation to "involve a broad cross-section of the community, so groups not previously involved in planning become involved" (WAC 365-196-600). Staff will seek opportunities to meet the public where they are by participating in existing community-hosted events, interest groups' reoccurring meetings (e.g., Farm Bureau), and other public meetings, as well as planning community 'pop- ups' in frequently visited locations.

The community engagement strategy goals are to:

- Engage with stakeholders early in the planning process.
- Understand community character, what makes Lewis County special.
- Build long-term, collaborative working relationships with community partners and stakeholders.
- Capture community vision.
- Balance state law and with community vision.
- Clearly communicate how feedback is used.
- Engage with the community in its full diversity to promote inclusivity.

Lewis County 2045 will rely on a set of clear messages to explain the process, needs and outcomes of the comprehensive plan update.

- Every 10 years, the communities of Lewis County will come together to create a vision for the County's future.
- The comprehensive plan is a tool that will help the County respond to growth and change over the next 20 years.
- The plan anticipates the needs of current and future residents, business owners and visitors to Lewis County.
- The plan will cover a range of issues including housing, land use, transportation, utilities, public facilities, parks, resiliency, economic development, and more. The comprehensive plan will guide growth in Lewis County over the next 20 years.
- Good policy should reflect input and experience of stakeholders.
- Interested members of the community are encouraged to join in the effort and help shape the future of Lewis County.
- The Lewis County Board of County Commissioners will formally adopt Lewis County 2045 and staff will use it as a framework for guiding growth and development.
- The Engagement Report will summarize stakeholder feedback and how it was used to craft policy.

Part of the CEP strategy is to coordinate with Tribal Governments associated with Lewis County including:

- Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation
- Cowlitz Tribe
- Nisqually Indian Tribe
- Quinault Tribe
- Puyallup Tribe
- Squaxin Island Tribe
- Steilacoom Tribe

The County recognizes that Tribal Governments may engage at their discretion. The County will include interested Tribal Governments in Lewis County 2045 to the extent they are able and willing to participate.

Mindful of HB 1717 (2022) requirements, Lewis County will:

- Invite Tribal Governments to voluntarily participate in the comprehensive planning process.
- Share process updates and continue to invite, regardless of their level of participation in the process.
- Share draft materials as they are available.
- Facilitate communication between tribes and the County, including support to resolve issues related to plan changes and regulations.
- Invite tribal governments to participate in the development of countywide policies, including policies that allow for the protection for cultural resources if desired.

Engagement Approach

Staff, and their consultant, "pledge consistent, meaningful, and timely engagement of the Lewis County community." The project will take place over four key phases, which include: Building the community vision and creating the draft plan, reviewing the draft plan, incorporating comments, and public hearings and adoption. Different tactics will be used in different phases to encourage the most meaningful participation. The County has identified a range of engagement tactics to connect with stakeholders. These engagement tactics may be used at different times throughout the project. This section will outline the engagement tactics to be used throughout the update process.

Figure 4 Engagement Tactics

Community Meetings – Collaborate

County staff will hold community meetings to collaborate with the public. The project team will prioritize attending existing community events that are widely and regularly attended to reach as many stakeholders as possible.

Meeting types will vary by need and phase but may include:

- Community events – use regularly scheduled meetings as an opportunity to share project details (e.g., Realtor's Lunch and Learn).

- Community interviews – The County will hold one-on-one conversations with certain groups or individuals who may have specific interest or expertise in a particular topic. These conversations may be held virtually, in-person or over email. These conversations will be organized as needed.
- Open house events – The County may hold open house events where the public can attend to learn about the project and provide input on goals and policies. These events will provide an open format to allow stakeholders to talk to County staff, learn more about the project and provide feedback.
- Climate resilience focused interviews – The County will hold one-on-one discussions with individuals who may have a specific interest in natural hazard mitigation efforts.

Survey – Involve

Lewis County will host two community-wide surveys throughout the planning process. These will be short, informal surveys to encourage community members to share their feedback. Surveys will include a targeted 5-6 questions. The first will coincide with the visioning phase (April to May 2024). The purpose of this survey is to understand the interests and values of the stakeholders. The second survey will coincide with the draft plan release (timeframe to be determined). The purpose of this survey will be gathering feedback on the draft plan and make updates leading to a final plan.

Webpage – Inform

A project webpage has been created on lewiscountywa.gov titled: Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. This webpage will host project documents, updates, schedule of events are more.

Navigate directly to the webpage using this link: tinyurl.com/LewisCounty2045

There are three main purposes for the website:

- Provide timely updates and materials to learn about the comprehensive plan document and process in greater detail.
- Advertise upcoming opportunities to get the community involved.
- Report back to the community on collected engagement data.

Social Media – Inform

There will not be a social media account for Lewis County 2045, instead staff will share information to existing platforms to encourage participation. Social media will be used to share project information, public meetings, and comment opportunities.

Platforms to share information with include, but are not limited to:

- East Lewis County News
- Lewis County News and Events
- Living Lewis County
- Lewis County Happenings 2.0

Community Engagement Summaries – Inform

Engagement summaries will be completed for each activity to detail conversations, feedback, and next steps (e.g. survey, meeting, interview, or pop-up series). These summaries will be available on the County website in a document titled Engagement Results, which will be updated throughout the project. Summaries will also be shared with the Lewis County Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners. Staff will notify email subscribers when these summaries are available.

Educational Materials - Inform

County staff will work with local colleges and districts to create learning materials to engage students and prepare materials to distribute to parents and guardians of students. In addition to coordination with students, the County may use these materials to engage and encourage conversations with community groups and organizations such as:

- Youth councils
- Senior center
- Agriculture organizations
- Farms
- Major employers
- Health departments
- Social services

Community Pop-ups – Involve

Staff and consultants will host pop-up tabling activities at specific community locations, (e.g., grocery stores). Each pop-up tabling opportunity will provide project information in an informal setting with the aim of connecting with groups who may not otherwise participate.

Community Events – Involve

The County will partner with organizations throughout Lewis County to host a table or booth to engage with stakeholders who may not participate in public meetings or online surveys. Staff will prioritize attending existing community events that are widely and regularly attended to reach as many stakeholders as possible. Examples are the Onalaska Apple Festival or the Packwood Mountain Festival.

Presentations to Board of County Commissioners and Others – Inform

Throughout the project, County staff will provide updates to interested groups of elected officials, including the County Commission to describe the process, communicate engagement efforts and outcomes and give updates on the plan development.

Translation and interpretation - Inform

The County intends to reach and engage with those who may not speak English fluently. In Lewis County, Spanish is the most common primary language after English. The County will provide all basic project information, surveys, and other significant outreach materials will be translated into Spanish. Interpreters may also be included for in-person meetings and open houses.

	Building Community Vision and Develop Draft Plan				Review the Draft Plan			Incorporate Comments into Plans			Public Hearings and Adoption Process					
Task	**MAR**	**APR**	**MAY**	**JUN**	**JUL**	**AUG**	**SEP**	**OCT**	**NOV**	**DEC**	**JAN**	**FEB**	**MAR**	**APR**	**MAY**	**JUN**
Inform	• Website, email and social media • Translation • Engagement summaries • Educational Materials				• Website, email and social media • Translation • Engagement summaries • Educational Materials			• Website, email and social media • Translation			• Website, email and social media • Translation • Engagement summaries					
Involve	• Community Events and pop-ups • Survey				• Community Events and pop-ups • Survey						• Community Events and pop-ups					
Collaborate	• Community Meetings, including interviews • Board of County Commissioners and Planning Commission meetings				• Community Meetings, including interviews • Board of County Commissioners and Planning Commission meetings			• Community Meetings, including interviews • Board of County Commissioners and Planning Commission meetings			• Community Meetings, including interviews • Public Hearings • Board of County Commissioners and Planning Commission meetings					

Figure 5 Engagement Tactics and Phases

Anticipated Barriers to Participation

The County understands that there may be existing barriers to participation. This CEP has identified potential barriers and strategies to overcome these. Engagement will be mindful of these barriers and strategies to maintain an accessible process.

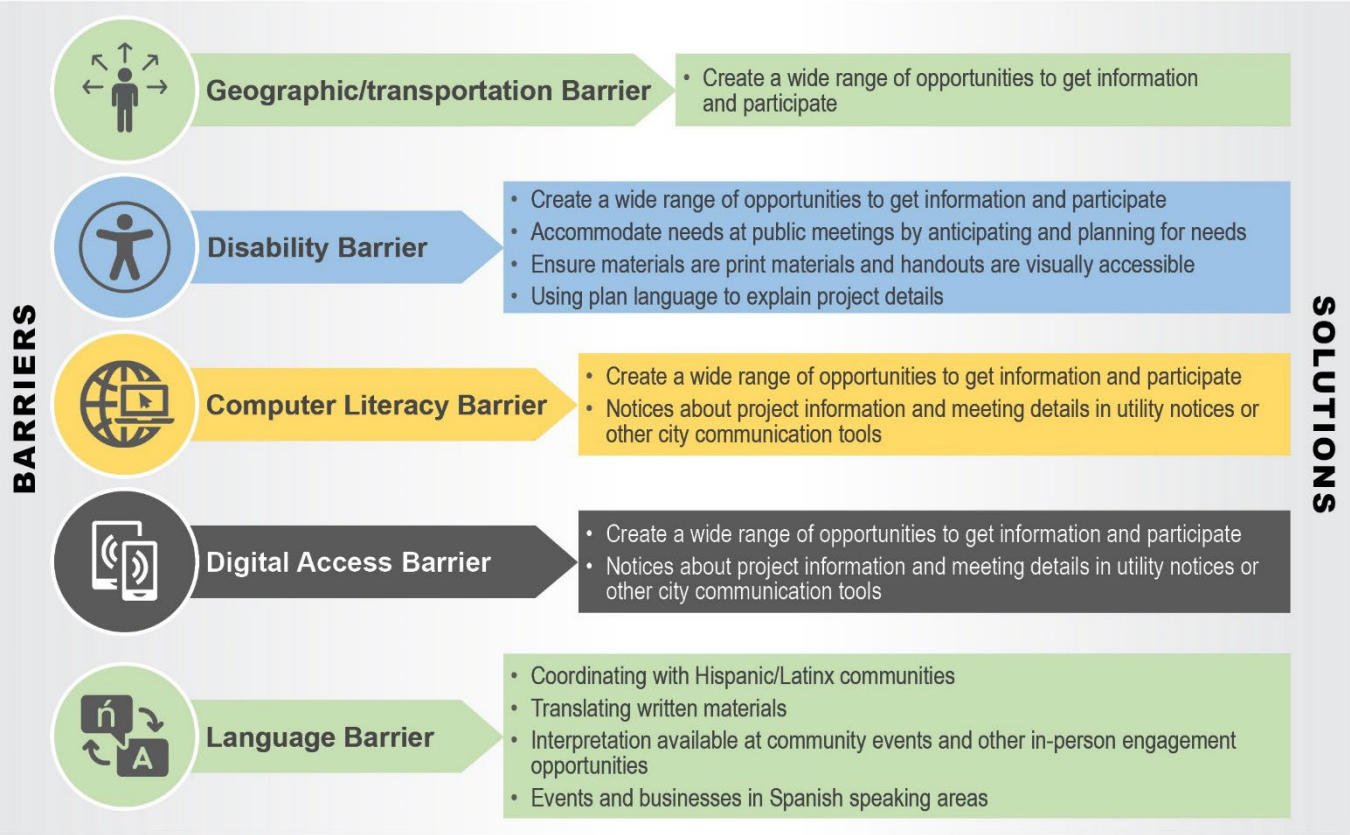

Figure 6 Engagement Barriers and Solutions

Climate Resilience Element

In 2023, the Washington Growth Management Act (GMA) was amended to require Comprehensive Plans begin including the climate change and resiliency element to ensure local governments prepare to adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate. This new requirement requires goals and policies to improve climate preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. Lewis County 2045 will define climate and resilience as: strategies to cope with and manage the impact of severe weather events and associated natural hazards to prevent impacts from getting worse. This will build on two key studies completed by the County:

- 2023 Lewis County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update
- Flooding information/studies around I-5

The County aims to create a climate and resilience element in the plan that reflects the community priorities and values and increases the chance of community buy-in. Lewis County will conduct

engagement in support of this element concurrently with other engagement efforts and identify specific opportunities for members of the community living in areas identified has having risks associated with natural hazards including flooding, wildfire, extreme heat, etc.

Engagement goals

- Educate the community about climate resilience and hazard mitigation throughout the engagement process.
- Educate the community about their role in the planning effort and the importance of their input.
- Focus on communities most impacted by natural hazards for targeted interviews, focus groups, and community advisory committees.
- Integrate community feedback into the development of the climate and resilience element and clearly communicate how feedback is being used.

Key messages

- The community has an opportunity to shape the vision and direction of the County's climate resiliency planning efforts.
- The climate and resilience elements are not guidance, they will be integrated into Lewis County 2045 documents to support the County in mitigating risks associated with natural hazards.
- Feedback will help guide the development of the County's climate resiliency strategies.

Engagement approaches

- Develop key messages to implement and share during community engagement events.
- Develop specific survey questions to aid in the development of climate and resilience section.
- Climate resilience focus groups/interviews.
- Prepare educational materials or presentations to share at schools and community colleges.

Budget

The County does not expect large direct expenses for this engagement effort. Any funds allocated to engagement are expected to go toward print materials (e.g. public meeting boards, fliers, signs) and providing light refreshments for in-person meetings (Figure 7).

ITEM	ESTIMATED COST
Print Materials (Including signs and fliers)	$1,000.00
Food for Events	$500.00
Event Space / Rental	No Cost Anticipated
Total	$1,500.00

Figure 7 Anticipated Budget