

Creating Verbal Public Comments for a General Plan/Element Update

Updates to a community's General Plan offer tobacco prevention coalitions an opportunity to contribute to the public discourse and visioning of their community's future. Ensuring health and tobacco-related issues are included at this stage can be key to future policy success. Below is a step-by-step guide and a 3-minute example to help you successfully create your project's verbal public comments.

STEP 1

Introduce yourself and your project. Thank everyone for the opportunity to participate in this work, acknowledging the elected body (city council or board of supervisors) and other contributors, such as staff, planning commissioners, consultants, etc. (Mention all that apply.)

STEP 2

Discuss how your project is relevant to General Plan (GP) work, incorporating select guiding principles and/or vision statements from your community's GP (e.g., healthy families, clean water, safe homes, etc.).

STEP 3

Identify the Element(s) you'll discuss. Note what currently does or does not exist in the Element(s) and what is legally required.

STEP 4

Provide a couple of relevant commercial tobacco/nicotine-related facts.

STEP 5

Offer recommendations on how the Element(s) could address these issues.

STEP 6

State how your project can offer help to the elected body, planning commission, staff, etc.

STEP 7

Thank them again for this opportunity and note you have submitted or will follow up with a more detailed written statement.



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Verbal Public Comment (3 Minutes)

STEP 1

Good morning. Thank you, Madame Mayor, City Councilmembers, and staff. My name is Josie Brooks and I'm the Community Engagement Coordinator for the Healthy Communities for All project. Thank you for this opportunity to provide public comments for the General Plan update.

STEP 2

It is well known that a community's priorities are reflected in the guiding principles of their General Plan. The City of Lindon intentionally chose to prioritize the health and safety of our residents and visitors. Our project also shares these priorities.

STEP 3

Our General Plan, which was last updated in 2009, addresses the regulation of hazardous materials to ensure residents are protected from accidental exposure. Since then, new products, such as electronic cigarettes, commonly known as vapes, have entered the commercial market. While it's clear that our community's General Plan intends to regulate all hazardous materials, as required by state and federal law, these products have escaped notice and, thus, regulation. Failing to regulate these new products can compromise the health and safety of our residents and visitors.

STEP 4

Our project has reviewed the existing Plan and found potential solutions to help address a few areas of concern. First, we know that nicotine and tobacco product storage and proper disposal present a growing problem. Tobacco products contain over 4,000 chemical compounds, of which over 60 are known carcinogens. The EPA has classified nicotine, nicotine e-liquid, and its salts as an "acute hazardous waste." According to the CDC, dermal exposure to nicotine can result in green tobacco sickness, characterized by nausea, vomiting, weakness, and fluctuations in blood pressure or heart rate. Further, nicotine metabolites seep into groundwater, posing a risk of contaminating the food we consume, and lithium-ion batteries used in vapes can also create a significant fire hazard and endanger our first responders.

STEP 5

Our General Plan can address these issues by incorporating policies, actions, and implementation measures to ensure the proper handling, storage, and disposal of these dangerous products and to be in compliance with state and federal law. It can also help first responders take action to contain hazards should spillage or disaster occur and it can protect humans, wildlife, waterways, and food-supply chains from these toxins by enacting product use buffer zones around sensitive areas, such as open space, agricultural zones, and youth-oriented facilities.

STEP 6

These are just a few examples of how our General Plan can work to create healthier and safer conditions for Lindon residents. We have submitted a more detailed written statement with more opportunities. Our project is available with free technical assistance to work with you, the planning staff, and commissioners at your convenience.

STEP 7

Thank you, again, for this opportunity to provide comments. We look forward to working together to help create a healthier, safer Lindon for all.