

Oak Lodge Governance Project shares survey results

Oak Lodge Governance Project Steering Committee

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Number of respondents want area to remain the same, while others wonder what incorporation could do

As Oak Lodge Governance Project (OLGP) explores governance options for the urban unincorporated areas of Oak Grove and Jennings Lodge, the OLGP steering committee is excited to report on the developments that have taken place over the past two months. In early November, we shared the news that a grant of \$100,000 had been awarded to study the economic realities and potential opportunities for the approximately 30,000 residents of the Oak Lodge community. The study will focus on the possibility of the area to annex, incorporate or remain unincorporated, and the results will be used to inform and empower community conversations once it's completed, which is expected to happen by the summer of 2021.

Combining lessons learned from past governance efforts, input from community leaders and information from other studies of this kind, in mid-November OLGP presented an initial scope of work to EcoNW, a team of analysts with deep historical knowledge of the economics, demographics and trends of this area.

While our proposal was being reviewed, we created a simple four-question survey to give community members an opportunity to ask questions and identify concerns. A link to the survey was printed in this publication, and it was broadcast to the two Community Planning Organizations in the area, as well as to community leaders and area newsletters with the request it be shared with their communities and mailing lists. In total, 86 people responded, with the vast majority identifying as area residents, as well as a few local business owners.

As planned, the [report detailing the results](https://bit.ly/2Nvst32) of the survey can be found at bit.ly/2Nvst32. While there will be extensive community outreach in the future, this survey was just a simple, early opportunity to chime in on a project that will likely last for several years. Clearly, this survey is not a statistically valid sample for an area the size of Oak Lodge and it is a misrepresentation to consider it as such. This survey simply served as a quick validation of the main concerns of the community — concerns that anyone participating in community activities has been well aware of for years.

Nearly 40% of respondents asked about economic issues related to what a new city's taxes and potential sources of revenue might be, with many hoping to learn about projected impacts from anticipated increases to taxes and fees. Over one third of respondents expressed a desire to see a straightforward pro/con comparison of the three options under study and roughly one quarter of respondents asked questions about land use and zoning. It is clear that residents want to see hard figures for a specific proposal to gauge individual impacts from new taxes and collective benefits from new revenue sources.

Two common themes were questions about the authorities of a city, with respondents seeking to learn what cities can regulate (often in terms of land use), and questions about impacts or changes to relationships with existing service providers and special service districts. Unsurprisingly, the Oak Lodge Water Services District and the North Clackamas Parks & Recreation District both enjoy a high rate of satisfaction among the respondents. As anticipated, a number of respondents want this area to remain the same. There is also a great deal of uncertainty about what a city can and cannot do, and great interest in how residents are to be involved in any change to the governance structure(s) of this area.

Underlying themes to much of the public input centered on understanding the difference between 'What can happen?' and 'What will happen?' In other words, what might be able to occur, and what might be compelled to occur by law, if there were to be a change in governance status (high-density zoning or sidewalks, for example).

In addition, many respondents clearly voiced their sincere interest in being engaged throughout this exploratory process, and that interest is most

welcome. In the near future, we plan to offer public information sessions and Town Hall-like Zoom events. For now we ask for patience as we determine the most effective ways to move forward given the various constraints we — like everyone else in the Oak Lodge community — must manage. This project is entirely led by volunteers, active community members juggling jobs, small children, safety concerns and the daily requirements of our households.

Please recall that this process is designed to be significantly different from other area projects that may be more familiar. Previous projects have driven toward a specific goal with deadlines and outcomes created through Clackamas County oversight. This is an open-ended project designed to be responsive to the desires and will of the residents of the Oak Lodge community and is deliberate in the choice to have no elected officials, county staff or influences outside the residents of Oak Lodge. This research study and the subsequent conversations it will stimulate is just the first phase of the Oak Lodge Governance Project, with additional phases forming organically as the project unfolds. At this point, there is no way of knowing how many phases there will be, what the timing of future phases will be, or what the ultimate results will be.

The OLGP is strictly focused on providing factual, analytical information to allow informed decision making by the residents of this area on future governance options. How that plays out will be determined by the people of this area, for this area.

Community outreach will commence in the summer of 2021 — when the results of the research study are available for discussion. These conversations will determine where the project needs to go next.

Again, the steering committee members of OLGP are all volunteer residents of Oak Lodge involved in many local groups. There are no, and there will be no, elected officials involved in the project. We are curious about the implications of alternative governance options and look forward to engaging with our neighbors through respectful discourse to collectively explore the most equitable way for our community to be governed. Equity and inclusion are essential for true representational discourse to occur, and the involvement of our neighbors — of all ages, creeds, colors, income levels, orientations and physical abilities — will be key to ensure that transformative discourse occurs.

Our website will be ready soon, and we'll continue to provide updates as the project develops. If you want to learn more check out [facebook.com/Oak-Lodge-Governance-Project-117770633469296](https://www.facebook.com/Oak-Lodge-Governance-Project-117770633469296) or contact us at oaklodgegovernance@gmail.com to be added to our mailing list.



COURTESY PHOTO - Clackamas County officials are eyeing the former Concord School in Oak Grove as a site for a new library and park.

Oak Lodge Governance Project Steering Committee members include Mitra Anoushiravani, Nathan Breitenfeldt, Valerie Chapman, Jane Civiletti, Tom Civiletti, Joseph Edge, Nathan Ember, Eleanore Hunter, Chips Janger and Cole Merkel.