

Downtown Camas Association Plant and Garden Fair - Event Summary



Event overview

The Downtown Camas Association (DCA) holds a Plant and Garden Fair each year. It's a popular event, attracting hundreds of people from across the Vancouver-Portland metro area. After a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the event returned in 2022. The DCA and the Mill Cleanup Community Advisory Group (CAG) identified the Plant Fair as an opportunity to connect with the community in downtown Camas, within sight of the mill. CAG members and consultant team members staffed a booth with visuals, rack cards, and comment cards.

Date: May 7, 2022
Time: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Location: In person, downtown Camas

Participation and staffing

CAG members Caroline Mercury, April Berlin, Marty Snell, and Steve Young participated. CAG member Randal Friedman also stopped by, even though he was manning a different booth for the event. Alan Hughes, Emily Hess, Abbi Russell, and ZZ Lundburg participated from MFA.



CAG member April Berlin speaks with community members during the May 7 Plant and Garden Fair

CAG and MFA members worked in shifts, so there were always two to three people with diverse knowledge of the site and process staffing the booth and talking with community members.

The booth also included a kids' craft table, which was overseen by a local Girl Scout troop. The crafts were popular and attracted many kids to the booth, bringing their parents and providing an activity while adults talked about the mill and the cleanup process.

Community priorities

The dot survey asked respondents to vote on four priorities to help CAG members understand what is important to the community and what the CAG should focus on in public participation and involvement with the Ecology process.

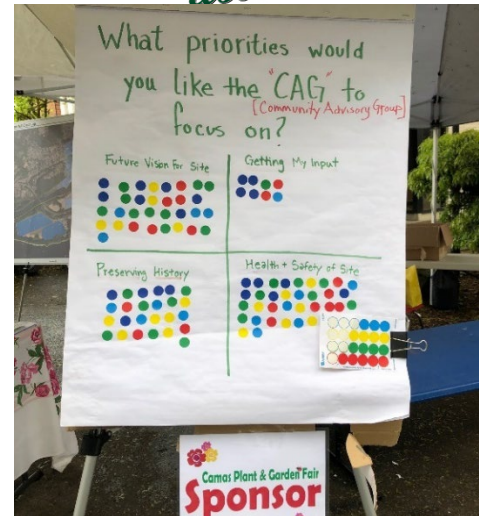
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The listed priorities were:

- Future vision for the site
- Getting my input
- Preserving history
- Health and safety of the site

Respondents identified the future vision and health and safety of the site as the top two priorities for the CAG. Preserving history was the third highest, and getting input received the fewest votes.



Community questions and interests

CAG members and MFA staff responded to questions and received a variety of input from booth visitors. A summary of questions and comments is captured in the table below. Look for a future Frequently Asked Question sheet on the project web page related to the questions and areas of interest below.

Community questions and interests
What is this group and how are you involved?
The mill is closed down, right?
What will happen to the property if/when the mill closes?
How big is the mill property?
How much of the mill is still operating?
What's GP going to do with the site?
How is GP participating in the cleanup?
What are the contaminants that the mill should clean up?
What are the health risks to the community? I have small children.
Why is it taking so long to start/make progress on the mill cleanup?
How long will cleanup take?
What is GP's commitment? Are they really going to clean up the site?
What will happen to non-GP property nearby if the mill site is redeveloped?
What will be done with the Camas Business Center property?

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What does the City of Camas want to see there in the future?
Assumptions it's a Superfund site.
Whatever goes into the site in the future should provide public benefit.
Keep long-term paper production going at the Camas mill at a small scale, even if it means reducing the GP property footprint to match what is needed for the current/future production needs.
Preserve papermaking history in Camas.
If the mill closes, don't demolish the entire site.
Future redevelopment should create a destination waterfront.
Keep the charm of the area; make sure the downtown is not disjointed if the GP property is redeveloped.
Thanks for asking our opinion and reaching out to the community!

Outcomes

An estimated 350 people directly interacted with staff at the booth during the day-long event. The team collected dozens of verbal comments, five written comments on comment cards, and six newsletter signups. The team also received 99 votes on the dot survey around CAG priorities.

Interactions	Comment cards	Newsletter signups	Project web page data (May 7 – 17, 2022)	Dot survey
Approx. 350	5	6	77 unique visitors 3:19 average time on page	99 votes

Conclusion and next steps

CAG and MFA participants felt the event was successful in reaching community members in Camas and Washougal and other nearby communities. Booth visitors shared that they attended the Plant Fair from Vancouver, Battle Ground, Portland, and other cities in the metro area.

Interest in the outreach and process is strong, and questions and comments showed that the CAG is providing the kind of grassroots engagement and information people need. This includes providing information in accessible ways: One visitor read and commented positively about the quality of translation used for the rack card printed in Russian.

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As anticipated, there is widespread misinformation about the mill's operations and not much understanding that a cleanup process is underway, what it entails, and the timeframe. This underscores the importance of the CAG's work and the Ecology Public Participation Grant, and helps the CAG effectively address the community's needs through future outreach.

The CAG plans to provide information throughout the Camas and Washougal communities—in active and passive ways—through the current grant period, which ends June 30, 2023. This includes providing rack cards at key locations like libraries and churches, working existing community events like the Plant Fair, and hosting standalone, process-related events. The dot survey results can help the CAG focus its work, and the questions above will be used to develop Frequently Asked Questions that can be shared with the community and used in future outreach and conversations.

Resources

Sign up for email updates and learn more at:

www.downtowncamas.com/camaswamillinfo

Email questions and comments to Caroline Mercury, DCA Past President:

camaswamillinfo@downtowncamas.com

Read and review the draft Remedial Investigation Work Plan:

<https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/gsp/Sitepage.aspx?%20csid=15156>