

GOVERNMENT

The Dalles, Oregon on Open.Media



The Dalles Homepage



The Dalles City Hall



The Dalles Marina

The Dalles is one of the oldest permanently occupied communities in Oregon and serves as the county seat of Wasco County. Located along the Columbia River about 85 miles east of Portland, The Dalles developed as a key transportation and trading center because of its strategic position at the eastern end of the Columbia River Gorge. Long before Euro-American settlement, the area around Celilo Falls was a major Native trading center for thousands of years. In the nineteenth century, The Dalles became an important stop on the Oregon Trail and later grew as a regional hub for river traffic, agriculture, and commerce. That layered history still shapes the city's identity today, visible in its historic downtown and long-standing role as a service center for north-central Oregon. ([Wikipedia](#))

The Dalles had a population of 15,608 at the 2020 Census, making it one of the larger communities in the Columbia Gorge outside the Portland metro area. The city functions as an economic and governmental center for the surrounding region, with employment tied to healthcare, education, agriculture, food processing, and public services. Its population reflects a mix of longtime residents, families, and workers connected to both the Columbia River economy and regional agriculture. The Dalles also serves as a hub for nearby rural communities in Wasco County, giving it a broader regional importance than its population alone might suggest.

The Dalles places a visible emphasis on public access to local government. City Council meetings are held at The Dalles City Hall, and the city publishes agendas, packets, minutes, and related materials online for residents to review. The city also maintains a public meeting portal with livestreams and archived recordings for City Council, Planning Commission, Urban Renewal, Historic Landmarks, and other public bodies, making it easier for residents to follow local decisions even if they cannot attend in person. That level of accessibility supports transparency around issues such as budgeting, land use, infrastructure, and long-range planning, and it reflects a broader commitment to keeping public meetings open and understandable to the community ([TheDalles.gov](#))

[View The Dalles Public Meetings On Demand](#)

Advocacy and Engagement: Understanding Public Meetings and Why They Matter

There is a room in your city, your county, or your school district where decisions are made that will affect your property taxes, the quality of your child's school, the development on the empty lot down the street, and the speed limit on the road you drive every morning. That room is almost certainly open to you. And it is almost certainly not full.

Public meetings are one of the most direct expressions of democracy available to ordinary citizens. They are not relics of a slower era or bureaucratic formalities to be endured. They are, in the most literal sense, the places where your community decides what it values, what it builds, and who it serves. And yet for most adults, the inner workings of these meetings remain almost entirely invisible.



What Actually Happens at a City Council Meeting?

If you have never attended a city council meeting, you might imagine something formal and inaccessible — elected officials debating policy in language designed to keep ordinary people at arm's length. The reality is often far more human, and far more consequential, than that.

A typical city council meeting follows a structured agenda. It usually opens with procedural items: approval of the previous meeting's minutes, announcements, and acknowledgment of any ceremonial business such as proclamations or recognition of community members. From there, the meeting moves into its substantive work.

Public comment is one of the most important features of any public meeting. This is the period — usually early in the agenda — when any resident may step to a microphone and address the council directly. There is typically a time limit, often two or three minutes, but within that window, an ordinary citizen has the full attention of their elected representatives on the record. It is a remarkable civic privilege that most people never use.

After public comment, councils move through action items: votes on ordinances, budget amendments, contracts, zoning changes, and policy adoptions. These are the decisions that carry legal and financial weight. A vote to rezone a neighborhood, approve a city contract, or adjust a municipal fee schedule happens here, often in a matter of minutes, with little fanfare and sometimes very little public awareness.

Understanding this structure demystifies the process. Once you know the rhythm of a public meeting, it becomes far easier to follow, to anticipate, and ultimately to participate in.

Proximity is a form of power. Most people simply do not know it is available to them.

How Live-Streaming Is Bringing Public Meetings to Everyone's Screen

For much of American history, attending a public meeting meant being physically present. That requirement, reasonable as it may sound, effectively excluded enormous segments of the population. Parents of young children, people who work evening shifts, individuals with disabilities, residents without reliable transportation, and those who simply live too far from city hall have all faced structural barriers to participation that had nothing to do with their interest or their investment in their community.



That barrier has been significantly lowered by live-streaming technology, and the communities that have embraced it are seeing real results.

When a public meeting is streamed live, a resident who cannot leave work early can watch the zoning hearing from their phone during a break. A parent managing bedtime routines can catch the school board vote on a budget amendment after the children are asleep. A resident with a mobility limitation can observe, engage with, and respond to their local government without navigating an inaccessible building.

Platforms like Open.Media have made this kind of access practical and affordable for governments of all sizes. Open.Media provides a purpose-built solution for live-streaming, archiving, and processing video of public meetings — tools that were once available only to well-resourced municipalities but are now within reach of small towns, special districts, and regional bodies with limited budgets and staff.

The impact goes beyond convenience. When meetings are streamed, public awareness of local governance increases. When awareness increases, participation tends to follow. Communities that have adopted live-streaming frequently report higher levels of public comment submission, greater attendance both in person and online, and a more informed and engaged citizenry overall.

Access, it turns out, is not a luxury feature of democracy. It is a foundational requirement.

We believe that an informed citizenry is the foundation of a healthy democracy, and that the tools to build that foundation are more accessible than ever before.

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CAREER ENGINE



Our [Open Media Career Engine](#) is a service offered to Employers in the Media & Journalism sector to help you find and hire more diverse jobseekers. This program has helped over 40 employers in Colorado's Media & Journalism field hire POC jobseekers at more the double the industry average. We help craft your job description to appeal to diverse applicants, post it to over 20 job boards proven to generate more diverse jobseekers, and manage the screening process so that even the smallest HR team can afford a broad and inclusive hiring process developed by industry leaders.

Email careers@openmediafoundation.org to explore how the OMCE can help you with your next hire.

Join an Open Media Committee

Fundraising Committee - Contact Tony Shawcross at tony@openmediafoundation.org

EVENTS



Lavender Hill Cultural District Theatre Festival, July 17-26

Lavender Hill Cultural District Theatre Festival is a bold celebration of fearless storytelling and unforgettable voices, bringing together powerful performances and dynamic theatrical experiences that honor history, identity, and resilience.

The Festival opens with 'I'm Harvey Milk.' It is a powerful and deeply moving theatrical portrait of one of the most influential civil rights leaders in American history. The play chronicles Harvey Milk's remarkable journey from an ordinary citizen to the first openly gay elected official in California. At a time when the struggle for equality remains as relevant as ever, the play reminds us why Harvey Milk's message continues to resonate: "Hope will never be silent."

[Visit Lavender Theater website for more information](#)



30th Annual Chicano Music Festival, July 30–August 2

The 30th Annual Chicano Music Festival is more than a concert series—it is a four-day celebration of the cultural messiahs, storytellers, and tradition bearers who keep Chicano and Mexican American heritage vibrant across generations. From classic and contemporary Chicano music to the broader traditions of roots music born from borderland life, the event highlights artists whose work carries memory, identity, resistance, and joy. In doing so, the festival becomes both a tribute and a gathering place: a space where culture is not only remembered, but actively lived, shared, and passed forward through music.

[Visit VisitDenver.com for more information](#)

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