

# **Ellensburg City Council**

## **Inclusion, Diversity & Equity**

### **Subcommittee Report**



December 2020

**Diversity** is inviting everyone to the party.

**Equity** is making sure everyone can get there.

**Inclusion** is making sure everyone feels comfortable while dancing.

## **FOREWARD**

All people want to be able to support themselves, feel safe where they live, and be respected for who they are.

We are grateful to the Listening Tour participants for sharing a glimpse into their lives in our community. Thank you for trusting us with your responses to our questions. It was an honor and privilege, and very humbling, to hear about your lived experiences in our community. You shared your concerns and hopes for Ellensburg.

Many of you made it very clear that you want to be more visible and have an active role in this community. You also told us that many families left Ellensburg because they felt threatened or unwelcome. Others are thinking of leaving if they or their families continue to feel unsafe.

We recognize that the voices heard represent a small slice of the Ellensburg citizenry, however, the concerns and ideas for change you voiced were surprisingly similar through all the sessions. People of color share many of the same challenges as LGBTQ people and people with disabilities and religious minorities. We are confident that the themes captured in this report are representative and provide a starting point for the conversations, connections and actions that will enable Ellensburg to do better.

By listening we heard about our community and the ways people in various religious groups, individual citizens, businesses and community organizations are welcoming. These actions provide a solid base from which to build a stronger community.

While it is not the role of the City government to provide all things to all people, we, as Councilmembers, can direct the policies, procedures and programs of the City government to be more inclusive, to embrace diversity, and to ensure equitable treatment of all citizens. We, as community leaders, can work with citizens, businesses, schools, and civic

and charitable organizations to encourage a culture of respect in our community.

We release this report at a time when our community and nation seem deeply divided politically. Many people have gone beyond disagreeing about the best way to solve problems to fearing and vilifying anyone from the "other side," emphasizing our differences instead of our commonality.

The recommendations in this report seek to build bridges across generations, cultures, abilities, and gender identity and in so doing, create a framework for understanding and healing across ALL that divides us. As one listening tour participant suggested, let us make the effort to "shed the hate and embrace the love" so that we may practice the neighborliness that makes us a supportive, resilient community.

Our hope is that you will want to be a part of this effort. Together, we can do better!

Mayor Bruce Tabb

Councilmember Nancy Goodloe

Councilmember Nancy Lillquist

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# **Ellensburg City Council**

## **Inclusion, Diversity & Equity Subcommittee Report**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Ellensburg City Council wants Ellensburg to be a place where everyone has the chance to flourish. It seeks to create a community with an environment that improves lives and supports a wide range of people.

Ellensburg is growing. More people call our city home than ever. We see more pressure for affordable housing, living wage jobs, and an infrastructure – from roads to utilities and open spaces – that supports this growth. We also know that as we grow, certain groups of people continue to feel excluded. Historical inequities are illuminated. We are listening to and acting on behalf of our residents to create a more equitable, just and safe community – one where all citizens know they belong and are welcome.

The Inclusion, Diversity and Equity (IDE) initiative has three key foundational pillars:

#### **1. Ellensburg cares.**

We are a community that cares for one another, and as such we want all people to feel a sense of belonging in this community.

#### **2. There are long-standing concerns about the treatment of people based on how they look, speak, or act, not who they are as a person.**

We are making history. We are embracing a future that sees diversity in Ellensburg – be that age, skin color, gender identity, religion, disability – as what makes us stronger.

#### **3. We can do better.**

Working together, all who live in Ellensburg today, and in the future, will have access to the resources they need to reach their full potential.

By listening, we learn. Over the course of three months, over 100 participants from various cultural and racial backgrounds joined in a listening tour. The participants helped us understand what it is like for them to live, work and play in Ellensburg. We heard good and bad.

## ***Background***

The Ellensburg City Council discussed the creation of an ad hoc committee to address diversity, equity and inclusion at their regularly scheduled June 15, 2020 council meeting. A proposal to consider three areas was initiated by Mayor Bruce Tabb: 1) engaging the community; 2) making a lasting commitment to equity and diversity for the community; and 3) ensuring that the City internalizes these principles. A result of the council discussion was the formation of a subcommittee on Inclusion, Diversity and Equity (IDE) composed of Mayor Tabb, and Councilmembers Nancy Lillquist and Nancy Goodloe to bring recommendations back to Council.

Several meetings of the subcommittee followed, and the notion of holding a listening tour came into focus early. Councilmembers have experience with listening to constituents through the hosting of Neighborhood Cafés during 2019. Using this experience as a guide, the subcommittee created an approach for each listening tour session that allowed for in-person (not more than 10 people due to COVID restrictions) or virtual meetings.

## ***Methods***

The IDE listening tour consisted of 17 listening sessions with groups of people in the Ellensburg community whose voices have not always been heard. Each listening session included 2 or 3 members of the city council subcommittee (one who served as host), a scribe/meeting facilitator, and the listening session participants (some restrictions applied due to the COVID-19 pandemic). The same five questions were posed to participants at each listening session. A de-briefing of the subcommittee after each session created the mechanism to develop common threads and themes which provide the basis for the recommendations in this report.

## ***Findings/recommendations***

For the most part, we heard that Ellensburg is a good community in which to live. Minority communities support each other when the broader community falls short. The City can be both welcoming and hostile. Strangers reach out. Neighbors help each other. Systems and institutions do not always support the values they state. That means that a community that is generally welcoming and supportive often falls short in interactions with marginalized communities. Whether it be the actions of people, places or practices, Ellensburg can take the steps needed for the benefit of all.

This report organizes Listening Tour participant comments into two categories.

First, issues, concerns and observations about inclusion, diversity and equity are summarized. Most of the participants in the listening tour focused on the places they frequent, such as schools and businesses. Stories were shared about unpleasant situations between people that are preventable. We heard about how information shared by governmental entities doesn't always reach all people.

Second, ideas for doing better, for being more inclusive, diverse, and equitable, are summarized. The listening tour participants were eager to share their ideas about how Ellensburg can do and be better. These participant recommendations included establishing a city IDE Commission, engaging city/community leaders in more intentional and coordinated ways in support of IDE and bringing people together to get to know each other as the unique people we are.

Learn and listen. Act and change. Do better. We all know Ellensburg cares.

# INTRODUCTION

## Background

Cities throughout the nation are grappling with the effects of systemic racism and engaging in conversations with their citizens which will lead to communities that are more inclusive, celebrate diversity, and are equitable for all. The people of Ellensburg have a clear commitment to those values. "We value a diverse, inclusive, and equitable community that is welcoming and supportive to everyone because it enriches our lives and enhances our individual and community well-being." SOURCE: City of Ellensburg Comprehensive Plan adopted 2017, as amended.

The Ellensburg City Council wants Ellensburg to be a place where everyone has the chance to flourish. The values expressed by the people of our community through the Comprehensive Plan support Ellensburg to be vital and strong. City Council's responsibility is to ensure that those values become real. In concert with people living in the community, Council seeks to create a community with a lived and built environment that improves lives and supports all people.

The Ellensburg City Council discussed the creation of an ad hoc committee to address diversity, equity and inclusion at their regularly scheduled June 15, 2020 council meeting. A proposal to consider three areas was initiated by Mayor Bruce Tabb: 1) engaging the community; 2) making a lasting commitment to equity and diversity for the community; and 3) ensuring the city internalizes these principles. The first step was the formation of a subcommittee on Inclusion, Diversity and Equity (IDE) comprised of Mayor Tabb, and Councilmembers Nancy Lillquist and Nancy Goodloe. The subcommittee was charged with identifying opportunities to move the IDE initiative forward and to bring recommendations to the Council.

To hear voices not normally heard, the idea of a listening tour was pursued. This format offered the best way to hear the issues of the affected community members and to listen to their concerns. Councilmembers have experience with listening to constituents through the hosting of Neighborhood Cafés during 2019. Using that experience as a guide, the subcommittee created an approach for each listening session within the comprehensive listening tour that allowed for in-person (not more than 10 people due to COVID restrictions) or virtual meetings.

This initiative—Inclusion, Diversity and Equity—took root when the Ellensburg City Council expressed their commitment to create a community that has access to a lived and built environment that improves lives, supports all people, and everyone has the chance to flourish.

## **Why now?**

Ellensburg is growing. More people call our city home than ever. We see more pressure for affordable housing, livable wage jobs, and infrastructure – from roads to utilities and open spaces – that supports this growth. We also know that as we grow, certain groups of people continue to feel excluded. Historical inequities are illuminated. We are listening to and acting on behalf of our residents to create a more equitable, just, and safe community – one where all citizens know they belong and are welcome.

The U.S. Census has designated Ellensburg as one of the top 10 fastest growing micropolitan areas in the nation, growing 2.8% between 2016 and 2017. Ellensburg residents who self-declare on the U.S. Census as 'white alone, not Hispanic or Latino' comprise 76.6% of our population. The remaining 23.4% are predominately 'Hispanic or Latino' at 12%, followed by 'two or more races' at 5.1% (source: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/ellensburgcitywashington> V2019).

Close to half of Ellensburg's 20,000 residents are Central Washington University (CWU) students. The University's emphasis on attracting students from minority and underserved communities, as well as diverse faculty and staff, affects the demographic character of Ellensburg. The changing nature of the labor force has also created greater diversity in the community. People from many different countries have settled in Ellensburg for various reasons.

In the 1800's, Native American people thrived in the Kittitas Valley, as noted in this article written by the Aronica family and featured in the Daily Record on October 12, 2020 (excerpts):

*Traditionally, the Pshwánapum lived in the Kittitas Valley as a sub-band of the larger political and extended family networks of the Yakama tribes and bands. These Pshwánapum members, also referred to as the K'titaas ("Kittitas") band, participated in subsistence patterns, moving seasonally between the low river-lands and high mountain areas to harvest and gather roots, salmon, berries, game, and medicines. ... The K'titaas hosted numerous other tribes, bands, and eventually west-ward European settlers on trade grounds east of present-day Ellensburg. These trade grounds included teepee encampments, horse corrals, and a pony racetrack for several thousand travelers and traders.... The legendary trade encampments are reported to be the precursor to the Ellensburg Rodeo - as an opportunity to display sportsmanship and craftsmanship between the gathered people...It is necessary to also recognize that traditional ways of life for the K'titaas, and Yakama as a whole Native Nation, were threatened in the 19th century when large numbers of miners, ranchers, and land-patent prospectors started pouring into the Pacific Northwest. When competing interests clashed, it was the Indigenous People who lost their cultural and ceremonial sites, access to foods and medicines, and ability to practice religious observances.*

Ellensburg's history mirrors the national experience to some extent. The town has a history of racial segregation and discrimination. An estimated 800 minority residents lived in the area of town south of 3rd and west of Main known as the Restricted District in the early 1900s. While many were seasonal agricultural workers, others worked in hotels and restaurants, for the railroad and in laundries. The District was home to an African American newspaper, a Black baseball team, Chinese laundries and two African American churches. Central Washington College of Education did not allow Black students until 1941 (pers. com. Oct. 30, 2020 Ty Phelan). Ellensburg public schools, however, were apparently integrated early on. (pers. Com. Nov 19, 2020 Regina Tipton). As World War II came to an end, so did the Restricted District as land and buildings were sold to industrial and business interests. This "Letter to the Editor" from the Daily Record, December 19, 1956 suggests discrimination and racism were evident in Ellensburg.

In recent times, Ellensburg residents have experienced and responded to several concerning events. In 2016, Ellensburg Police responded to complaints about KKK propaganda flyers being circulated around town. The community mobilized and began a campaign called Not In Our Kitt Co or NIOKC. Peaceful protests, yard signs and other signs of community support appeared. Ultimately, two individuals who lived outside of Ellensburg were charged with a crime, and subsequently left the area.

To The Editor:

I have felt the Christmas spirit up until now, but it has been lost although I hope not forever. A family of five little children and a widowed mother are practically forced to leave a community that has been called home to the mother for the past 27 years, for reasons hard to understand. They need a home and there is none available because they happen to be Negroes.

You wonderful Christians in the community no doubt recall the Christmas story of the birth of Christ, and this is almost a typical image of it except that she hasn't even been offered a stable.

Yes, it has finally hit home and I am surprised to know that you are willing to finance another family to move into your city from afar, but you run an American

temperature 30.

WHITE: Clear skies, road bare and dry, no new snow, 18 inches old at summit, temperature 22.

SATUS: Clear skies, road frosty no snow, temperature 33.

Negro away from home. I am searching for an answer as to why you great Christians and faithful churchgoers, trying to make it into heaven, are too good to have a Negro live next door to you. I'm wondering if this is the way you practice Christianity and democracy.

What do you stand for and where do you expect to spend eternity? There will be no private rooms. I hope that you will have a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

DOROTHY GRATTON  
(Mrs. James Gratton)

Daily Record, Dec. 19, 1956

In late 2019, the group Patriot Prayer came to town. Efforts by the group to agitate the locals prior to their arrival were unsuccessful, and the group's march ended up being sparsely attended by supporters and protestors alike. Then in 2020, with political and racial tensions elevated nationally after the highly visible murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police and other incidents, peaceful protestors began to gather at the courthouse daily to show support for racial justice under the banner "Black Lives Matter", which is defined by Wikipedia as "a decentralized political and social movement advocating for non-violent civil disobedience in protest against incidents of police brutality and all racially motivated violence against Black people." However, many know it as an organization founded by Marxists, with an anti-police platform whose protests have turned violent in some cities. The City Council's support for "Black Lives Matter" came in the form of a recommendation to create street art that drew both support and opposition, including threats of lawsuits, from citizens. The Council reconsidered the street art project and instead appointed a subcommittee to develop ideas for an art project in Rotary Pavilion. This subcommittee is partnering with the Arts Commission, soliciting ideas for artwork at the Rotary Pavilion around the theme of "Racial Equity" and is developing a long-term plan for supporting IDE in the arts. The protests and Council action sparked counter-protests in support of police and patriotic displays.

These are just some examples of our past that have shaped Ellensburg. The community has an opportunity to use this present moment to reflect upon who we are and who we want to be, and then create a path forward into a better future.

## **Methodology**

The Inclusion, Diversity and Equity (IDE) initiative has three key foundational pillars:

### **1. Ellensburg cares.**

We are a community that cares for one another, and as such we want all people to feel a sense of belonging in this community.

### **2. There are long-standing concerns about the treatment of people based on how they look, speak, or act, not who they are as a person.**

We are making history. We are embracing a future that sees diversity in Ellensburg – be that age, skin color, gender identity, religion, disability – as what makes us stronger.

### **3. We can do better.**

Working together, all who live in Ellensburg today, and in the future, will have access to the resources they need to reach their full potential.

The IDE council subcommittee hosted a listening tour to gain information and perspective from residents.

The listening tour consisted of 17 listening sessions with groups of people in the Ellensburg community who have not always been heard. Each listening session included:

- A City Council subcommittee member served as the host. Each council subcommittee member was responsible to serve as 'host' of a listening session. The host identified and invited possible attendees for each listening session<sup>1</sup>. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, listening sessions were held in-person (10 or fewer people in one room with masks and physical distancing) or virtually. Staff

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<sup>1</sup> For the Latino/a/x listening sessions, the City entered into a professional services agreement with Veronica Gomez-Vilchis. Veronica performed as host and translator to the Latino/a/x listening sessions.

handled the logistics for in-person or virtual meetings. Each listening session was scheduled for one hour, although some ran longer.

- Two or three members from the City Council subcommittee in attendance. At a minimum, two of the three IDE subcommittee members attended each listening session. Each listening session had City staff present as well.
- Scribe. To allow councilmembers the opportunity to listen and interact with people at the listening sessions, the City's Communications Officer served in the role of facilitator, scribe and timekeeper. To encourage open and honest responses, participants were assured that their comments would not be attributable to them as individuals.
- Five questions. Reflecting on the purpose of IDE, the City Council subcommittee members developed five questions to pose to all listening tour participants. The five questions asked were:
  1. What are some examples of how you feel welcome in Ellensburg? Are there people or places or events that stand out to you?
  2. What situations or conditions influence when you do or do not feel safe in Ellensburg?
  3. The number of people in our community is growing and becoming more diverse. What would you like to see the city do to be better prepared today for the changing demographics happening now and in the future?
  4. Not everyone in Ellensburg has access to what they need to reach their full potential. How can we as a city, as a community, do better at being a place where everyone has the chance to flourish?
  5. What is the best way for us to get information to you? And for you to share information with us? US mail? Email? Social media? Meetings?
- Discover themes and identify possible actions. Reflecting on the listening sessions, and in the case of the Latino/a/x audience, online survey responses, revealed the themes recorded in this report. These themes provide insight into those areas where the City Council can commit to doing better and provide insight into additional actions that can be taken to support these efforts.

# **LISTENING TOUR**

The best way to understand the needs of people from underrepresented and marginalized communities is to listen. The IDE subcommittee initiated a series of listening tours starting in late-July 2020. The subcommittee set a target of hosting up to twenty listening sessions by mid-October 2020; 17 listening sessions were held. Participants represented a variety of communities in Ellensburg: people age 65 plus, people with disabilities, people who are Indigenous, Asian, Black, or Hispanic, and members of the LGBTQ, Muslim and Jewish communities. Not everyone was a Person of Color.

In total, the listening tour heard from over 100 citizens from various cultural and racial backgrounds. Most listening sessions were held virtually, due to COVID-19 restrictions, with four in-person (socially distanced) and one online survey in response to the listening tour questions.

## **WHAT WE HEARD**

There were clear themes and consistent observations that were heard through the sessions. White LGBTQ, religious minorities, people age 65 and over, and people with disabilities shared many of the same concerns as People of Color. These common themes speak to the community issues, concerns, observations, and ideas brought forward by participants.

Direct quotes from participants are provided in pop-up text boxes throughout the report.

Participants shared the good and the bad of their lives in Ellensburg, and it was clear that they have made Ellensburg home. They live, work, study, practice their faith, and raise families in this community. People expressed the value of living in a small town—the strength of connecting to their faith-based communities, the opportunities to meaningfully volunteer and serve the community, and the support from their friends and neighbors.

The listening tour provided an opportunity for participants – people who have been here for generations and those new to town – to share the ways they do and do not feel welcome in Ellensburg. Most participants mentioned that it's the people who live here who make them feel welcome and that's why they want to stay in Ellensburg. Some stated that the place they moved from was not as welcoming as Ellensburg, and

"Every time I go to different events, I feel very welcomed. I am one member in Ellensburg, no different than other people. This gives me a good feeling."

that it was refreshing to come here. Others talked about events, like First Friday Art Walk and the Farmer's Market, as reinforcing a feeling of belonging in Ellensburg. There was recognition by some participants, too, that they could have moved elsewhere, but they stay in Ellensburg because it is where they and their family want to live.

We heard that various places in Ellensburg helped families feel welcome. At church, participants spoke of

feeling a sense of belonging and connecting to Ellensburg.

Participants felt the "churches in the community see me as who I am." Participants involved with youth sports also talked about a sense of inclusion and involvement that reach all – young and old. Others spoke of the kindness of store clerks during COVID who wear facemasks that are clear and allow hearing impaired people to read their lips.

"I praise our city for the Not In Our Kitt Co response [to the KKK flyers], and how our community rallied."

Ellensburg's western culture was raised many times.

Participants spoke of the rodeo and how it is integral to Ellensburg. While the Rodeo is an important cultural event, concern was raised that the current event is specific to one culture, the contributions of indigenous people are diminished. "Fake Indian" acts have been hired to depict indigenous people. Other groups with a history of rodeos and western culture, such as Mexican vaqueros or the International Gay Rodeo Association are excluded. Participants would choose cultural integration rather than assimilation of various cultures.

We also heard about law enforcement. People related good and bad experiences. "EPD has such kind officers. I was shoveling my sidewalk, and an officer stopped and asked me what I was doing. I said I was shoveling snow, and he got out of his patrol car, asked me for the shovel, and took care of the snow shoveling for me. I feel privileged to live in Ellensburg where people are kind" (Listening Tour participant). People of Color relayed that they felt targeted by law enforcement and were not comfortable either approaching or being approached by officers. A current African American student

related that he had been pulled over by police three or four times in Ellensburg. He said if something were to happen, he wasn't sure calling the police would be in his best interest.

"Show more love to block out the negative. The community is showing negative or neutral but not showing the love."

The listening tour platform pointed to how adaptive people are to situations and conditions that are not necessarily comfortable or welcoming but have been present for a very long time. Nonetheless, these situations sometimes left participants feeling unsafe. The participants were also encouraged to look ahead to how we can do better. As one participant stated "I believe if you want to see change, you must participate in it. For

the most part, Ellensburg is a beautiful, wonderful town. It doesn't matter where you go, there will be some bad people. I am involved in my community. I try to fuse the two cultures [Hispanic and Anglo] to learn from each other. Get to know your neighbor. Overall the town is positive."

## **PARTICIPANT ISSUES, CONCERNS, AND OBSERVATIONS**



### **Ellensburg cares.**

We are a community that cares for one another, and as such we want all people to feel a sense of belonging in this community.

During the listening tour, most CWU student participants expressed they do not feel respected, accepted and valued in our community. Most non-student resident participants felt welcome and comfortable in Ellensburg most of the time, but expressed concerns about not feeling respected, accepted, and valued at times in their lives throughout our community—in interactions with some community members, the City, the Police Department, local businesses, and educational institutions.

## We heard about the City of Ellensburg

Participants suggested program ideas, commented on their expectations when interacting with City staff and their desire for the City Council to show leadership in setting a tone of respect for the community.

Participants frequently mentioned the following issues, concerns and observations.

- The City Council is inconsistent about denouncing racist acts (good job with KKK flyers in 2016, but not with graffiti/vandalism this year). Participants desire leadership and visual cues to know Ellensburg is safe.
- People of Color feel targeted while walking and driving in Ellensburg.
- Participants do not feel that they have the support to understand and access City services.
- The City does not adequately inform all sectors of the community of leisure and recreational opportunities.
- The City does not conduct adequate outreach to inform and engage all who live and work in the City.

## We heard about educational organizations

### ELLENSBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT (ESD)

Schools are the focal point of the community for families. Our children receive not only academic instruction but also engage in sports and clubs, build social skills, and make lifelong friends. Participants want schools to be safe places for their children. At a majority of the 17 listening sessions, participants recounted painful events involving their children with their peers. K-12 students often interact with one another in hurtful ways. Parents reported these encounters occurred during class, while riding the school bus, during recess, and at school events. Parents felt that teachers, staff, and administration did not always react in ways in which parents felt were in the best interests or supported their student family members.

"I had an experience in the school reception area where I was told 'I'm too busy to help you' but a white person entered and was helped right away."

Participants frequently mentioned the following issues, concerns and observations.

- Bullying and insensitive remarks occur based on skin color and ethnicity, gender identity, and religious dress.
- Some teachers, staff and administrators are helpful, but others look the other way or make excuses to not act.
- Some bus drivers are reluctant to intervene in student conflicts.
- Some drivers either ignored or did not report incidents which occurred on the bus.
- Some parents of students of color feel ignored when interacting with ESD employees over issues with their children.
- School curriculum does not adequately include the history or perspective of diverse groups.

#### CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Most students felt more comfortable on-campus than in the community, however, it was also mentioned that the campus has room for improvement.

People frequently mentioned the following issues, concerns and observations.

"I feel like CWU and the city are separate. Ellensburg is not a college town, it's a town with a college inside of it."

- The CWU campus does not feel accessible to non-student residents.
- Some students do not feel safe off-campus.
- Though CWU has made strides in building a welcoming environment, some students feel harassment and hostility is directed at them on campus.
  - The community doesn't know what CWU events/activities are available or open to the public.
  - The students do not know what community events/activities are available or open to them.
  - Students expressed a desire for more meaningful interactions to build bridges with community members.

"I'm not coming back after school because of the people in Ellensburg. I like the weather here, but I don't want to raise a family here. This was a college experience. My family hates coming here."

## We heard about businesses

Overwhelmingly, participants in the Listening Tour want to buy local. However, many refused to shop where they feel threatened or unwelcome. Participants expressed the belief that there are missed opportunities to serve more people and improve business profitability.

Listening session participants disclosed that businesses have an opportunity to be more inclusive by offering products and services, and improving customer service, in a way that fills the needs of all who shop in Ellensburg.

Participants frequently mentioned the following issues, concerns and observations.

"My parents thought about starting a business in Ellensburg, but didn't know how, so they saved their money, then they moved."

- There is a desire for personal care products (e.g. haircare, makeup) for people with brown/black skin tones; these potential customers order products on-line or go out-of-town for them.
  - There is a need for haircare services (e.g. barber, salon) for all hair types; people leave Ellensburg to get their hair cut.
  - People with diverse cultural backgrounds want to buy their own ethnic food selections from local grocery stores; instead they travel out of town to stock up.
  - Participants want restaurants that serve cultural foods.
  - Participants want health care providers who look like them.
  - Participants want health care providers who understand their culture and their varying medical needs.
- Participants do not feel welcome in some stores, restaurants, businesses - they feel watched, followed, and, at times, clerks/wait staff are rude or suspicious.
- There is a sense of not knowing if it is 'safe' to enter stores, businesses, or eat at certain restaurants.
- Clerks and wait staff are not trained to accept tribal identification cards.
- Employees are not trained to support people with disabilities in stores and restaurants nor are they aware of the legal requirements related to service animals.

- The higher education accomplishments (degrees, certifications, training) and job skills that many persons from other countries bring with them are often not recognized or valued by prospective employers in our City.



**There are long-standing concerns about the treatment of people based on how they look, speak, or act, not who they are as a person.**

We are making history. We are embracing a future that sees diversity in Ellensburg – be that age, skin color, gender identity, religion, disability – as what makes us stronger.

"We talk about Native peoples in the past tense. We are still here."

Many Ellensburg residents see the town as historically and culturally "white," even though minority residents have been a part of the community since its founding; indeed, the *K't'itaas* ("Kittitas") and *Pshwánapum* ("Wanapum") peoples welcomed white European traders to this area, and Black and Asian people made significant contributions to the early settlement.

## We heard about interpersonal interactions

Stereotyping and bias, are of concern for people of marginalized communities. Participants believe that people displaying bias may not always know that they are doing so. What is said, verbally or with body language, can imply that some are less than others and don't have value.

"There are perceptions about me that aren't true."

Participants frequently mentioned the following issues, concerns and observations.

"People fear what they don't understand. Racism comes from people's fear and comes out in anger."

(e.g. stereotyping) and micro-aggression (e.g. staring, bullying).

- People often make judgements about one's character, who someone "is" because of their skin tone, disability, mannerisms, or how they look.

- Visual cues or signs set the tone for when someone does (e.g. Not In Our Kitt Co) or does not (e.g. Confederate flag) feel safe.

- People experience implicit bias

"Being disabled means people think you are damaged in some way."

- There are missed opportunities to learn about one another.
- Cultural events and celebrations are meaningful places for people to connect, yet they occur in a haphazard or sporadic manner.

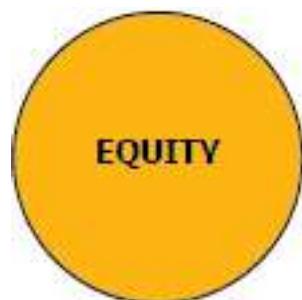
## We heard about cultural sharing

At most listening sessions we heard a desire for creating a gathering place for people to share stories, share foods, engage with people of their culture and to introduce others to it. This place (or places) could be a permanent location for all community members to enjoy.

Participants frequently mentioned the following issues, concerns and observations.

- The campus and community seem separate and divided.
- There is no place to go to be together, to teach young people cultural traditions, or to welcome newcomers.
- There is no place for others to learn about different cultures.
- There is no place to practice cultural traditions year after year.

"I implore you to educate, deconstruct the community use of stereotypes. Be open in ways for people to learn."



### We can do better.

Working together, all who live in Ellensburg today, and in the future, will have access to the resources they need to reach their full potential.

## We heard about access to resources

"It's the people who made me feel welcome, made me want to stick around."

Participants said that access to resources for people who are currently employed looking to advance in their field or make a career change, or for people who want to start a business, are either not available or not known.

Participants frequently mentioned the following issues, concerns and observations.

- Language, education (e.g. degree), age (e.g. youth), immigration status, and disability impact employment opportunities for the participants.
- Jobs open for adults and youth aren't well advertised.
- Culturally diverse people with ideas for new businesses do not know how to get started.
- Those moving here from a foreign country face additional hurdles of verifying credit and credentials that affect housing and employment opportunities.

## We heard about city services

The City of Ellensburg provides services to citizens such as utilities, transportation infrastructure and transit service, policing, community development, library, and parks and recreation facilities and programming.

Participants frequently mentioned the following issues, concerns and observations.

"You don't see yourself anywhere. My experience is that I'm invisible."

- People who do not speak English or are disabled have difficulty accessing some City services.
- Affordable accessible housing in Ellensburg is greatly needed.
- Some people with disabilities rely on walking and transit; they have difficulty navigating some City infrastructure (e.g. sidewalks and traffic lights that have very short time periods for crossing and that do not have audible cues for those who need them).
- There is a perception that People of Color are stopped for traffic infractions more frequently than whites.
- Participants want more activities to do locally (e.g. bowling alley) for adults and youth.
- The cost of participating in City sponsored activities can be a barrier to participation.

## PARTICIPANT IDEAS for DOING BETTER

Participants suggested the following actions to help all citizens feel welcome and flourish in Ellensburg.



### **Ellensburg cares.**

We are a community that cares for one another, and as such we want all people to feel a sense of belonging in this community.

## **Ideas we heard for City of Ellensburg**

- Show support for and address issues of racial injustice and diversity. Make stronger statements and take action to show people that hate and hostility are not community values.
- Make information easily available -- in-person, online and in print -- for people who are disabled or who don't have English as their first language.
- Develop, distribute a city newsletter in the utility bill.
  - Celebrate the diversity of the community through Council proclamations.
    - Create and publicize more programming and scholarships for youth (e.g. international movies in the park, bilingual programming) and seniors.
    - Review transit, traffic, crosswalk timing through an accessibility lens.

"I don't want to change your beliefs, but I do expect to be treated as a person."

"People fear what they don't understand. Racism comes from people's fear and comes out in anger."

## **Ideas we heard for educational organizations**

For the Ellensburg School District:

- Dedicate resources to student learning about culture and traditions, sexuality and gender, and sensitivity training.
- Immediately address behaviors (e.g. bullying, use of the 'n' word, demeaning brown/black skin people, etc.) in schools, on school buses and at school events, and be accountable to ensuring a safe learning space for all.
- Provide resources (e.g. interpreters, bilingual teachers) to support all families.
- Measure how schools and the Superintendent, principals, and administrators are performing in the area of social justice.
- Normalize uniqueness.

"It's the bullying at school that gets to me."

## For Central Washington University (CWU)

- Create more opportunities for students and community members to interact in ways they get to know each other (e.g. volunteering, internships).
- Better connect CWU (e.g. Diversity and Equity Center at CWU, other organizations) with the city.
- Encourage promotion of CWU events to the general public, and community events and activities to students.

## Ideas we heard for businesses

"I get  
watched in  
stores."

- Display visual signs (e.g. pride flag) and host events (e.g. Hispanic Heritage Month night) that demonstrate that the business practices and supports inclusivity. Help customers know they can feel safe and welcome in the business.
- Expand product selections available in stores (culturally specific food, hair care products, clothes, etc.) and/or create and promote a system whereby customers can place special orders for these products.
- Develop the capacity to provide services (e.g. health care, haircuts, barber, restaurants, etc.) to broaden existing services and reach new customers.
- Extend a welcoming hand to newcomers (e.g. welcome wagon) and have a way for people to report businesses or their employees who are not welcoming.
- Offer training to employees on how best to serve all customers including people from marginalized communities.
- Hold employees accountable for how they interact with people while at work.
- People feel safer in a place where they see someone like them; actively promote and recruit individuals from marginalized communities (visible and invisible) to apply for jobs at their business (bilingual, disabled, People of Color, LGBTQ, etc.).

"Veterans with mental health issues struggle in our community, there are not enough providers. People end up going out of town."



There are long-standing concerns about the treatment of people based on how they look, speak, or act, not who they are as a person.

We are making history. We are embracing a future that sees diversity in Ellensburg – be that age, skin color, gender identity, religion, disability – as what makes us stronger.

## Ideas we heard for improving interpersonal interactions

"I've been called names in the store parking lot, racial slurs, people yelling out things. Some neighborhoods I get stares and glares. Most of the time it [Ellensburg] is a good place [to live]. But there are those moments, then all that safety is out the window."

- Let community members know you care with visual cues, such as signs, nods of greeting, eye contact, a word of greeting.
- Recognize there are times when we have attitudes towards people or associate stereotypes with them without our conscious knowledge.
- Be thoughtful about how our words and actions impact others.
- Be allies for one another.

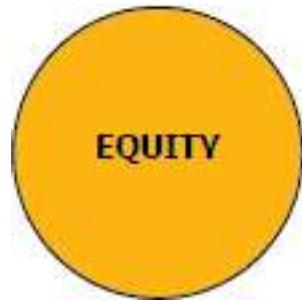
## Ideas we heard about cultural sharing

- Create and support a shared place where everyone in the community can gather with each other and learn about different cultures, people (e.g. food, religion, traditions).
- Hold consistent events and cultural celebrations (e.g. Pow Wow, PRIDE, Cinco de Mayo, summer diversity literacy projects, etc.) that bring groups together, and help others learn about them.

"We don't have welcome places to gather - to share food and culture, to learn traditions from others."

- Explore opportunities for everyone – youth, CWU students and adults – to engage in activities which promote the coming together of people of different ages, cultures, abilities, and gender preferences.

"I'm less comfortable in the evening in town when there are lots of people and drinking. Non-verbal looks, length of stares. I have to be on guard, alert."



### We can do better.

Working together, all who live in Ellensburg today, and in the future, will have access to the resources they need to reach their full potential.

## Ideas we heard to improve access to resources

- Provide resources and referrals, and complementary social services in one central convenient place.
- Intentionally attract and support minority-owned businesses to pursue entrepreneurial ventures by providing resources, support, and training.
- Support families on the path to financial security by encouraging living wage jobs and encourage more daycare opportunities.
- Diversify the existing business composition to include new businesses that focus on the gaps to fully serve all residents locally.
- Deliver training (e.g. skill building, youth focused, trades, entrepreneurship) and programs (e.g. ESL) that inspires people to reach for their dreams.

## Ideas we heard to improve City services

*Relating to Ellensburg City Council –*

- Continue to pursue and support efforts to increase living wage jobs and affordable housing.
- City Council should be more verbal and more visible when events that do not reflect this community's values occur.
- Review the fees and costs for City sponsored recreation and leisure activities and the Library to support all to participate.
- Consider the impact of decisions to marginalized communities when making policy decisions.
- Create an Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Commission of community members to keep marginalized voices part of the discussion.
- Revive the work of Not In Our Kitt Co, an anti-hate community group.

“Owning a home makes you part of the community here.”

- Create and implement a plan of action on how to engage area residents to promote mutual understanding of one another.
- Provide a framework that encourages people to connect with one another and to be allies for one another.

*Relating to City Staff -*

- Make the outcome of apparent hate incidents more visible.
- Create and sustain a way for police officers to be well known and trusted by the community.
- Ensure equity and diversity in the City's hiring process.
- Create online portals, supportive print materials and in-person accessible information that enables a diverse community to interact comfortably with the City (paying bills, starting City services, permitting, and recreation opportunities).
- Improve outreach to people of different cultures.

"I'm a bit leery now, because I used to know people in law enforcement, but I don't know if I will lose my life to them. Nowadays, I think of it - them shooting me - because of some of the things that are going on."

**ELLENSBURG CITY COUNCIL**  
**INCLUSION DIVERSITY AND EQUITY SUBCOMMITTEE**  
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Ellensburg is a growing, diverse community. The peoples' voices heard from our community in the creation of this report reflect that diversity. Thoughts and experiences were shared by community members who identify as, African American, Asian, Indigenous, Latino, and White. People spoke of living in Ellensburg as members of the LGBTQ community, persons with disabilities, Seniors, and as Persons of Color. Each person brought their unique perspective to this effort. All want their voices to be a greater part of our community's conversation. Common themes and a path forward to incorporate those voices emerged.

The IDE Subcommittee recommends that Ellensburg City Council (Council) take the following actions.

1. Create and sustain an Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Commission for the City of Ellensburg. Members would be charged with:
  - a. Informing Council of actions taken to address identified issues related to Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity and report on the outcomes of those actions;
  - b. Advise this and future Councils on actions needed to sustain and improve Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity in the City;
  - c. Review and recommend amendments to the City's Comprehensive Plan which incorporate the values of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity into the Comprehensive Plan; and
  - d. Recommend a community engagement plan that includes the following:
    - i. Activities such as forums, community gatherings, and events to promote mutual understanding and that encourage people to connect with one another;
    - ii. Identifying partner groups or organizations to sponsor regular cultural celebrations;
    - iii. Strategies to distribute information to people of different cultures (e.g. bilingual resources, disability resources, culturally appropriate ways);
    - iv. Receive complaints and serve as a facilitator to seek remedy without enforcement authority;
    - v. Develop tools for the City that consider the impact of decisions on marginalized communities; and
    - vi. Strategies to demonstrate that Ellensburg cares.

2. Ensure that the City denounces incidents of hate that occur within the community as they occur.
3. Prepare a schedule to consistently celebrate the diversity of the community through Council proclamations and social media posts.
4. Promote policies that attract/nurture living wage jobs, facilitate job/skill training and entrepreneurship for all, encourage construction of affordable/accessible housing, and advance access to daycare.
5. Support and/or liaison with the work of organizations, such as, Not In Our Kitt Co, an anti-hate community group, and other similar organizations.

The IDE Subcommittee will continue their work, starting with the following:

1. Engage the IDE subcommittee of the Ellensburg School Board in a conversation about the community's issues and recommendations raised during the Listening Tour;
2. Engage the board of directors and executive team of the Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce and Ellensburg Downtown Association in a conversation about what was heard by the Listening Tour participants about existing businesses in Ellensburg;
3. Engage civic, faith, and other organizations in a conversation about this report, community vision and values, ideas for making Ellensburg a more welcoming community; and
4. Engage community members in a conversation about this report, community vision and values, ideas for making Ellensburg a more welcoming community.

The IDE Subcommittee recommends the City Manager consider the budgetary impacts and staffing to accomplish the following:

1. Develop a City-wide IDE related training program and the means to ensure the outcomes meet the goals of the IDE initiative;
2. Ensure equity and diversity in the city's recruitment, hiring, and retention processes;
3. Make information easily available -- in-person, online and in print -- for people who are disabled or who don't have English as their first language;
4. Place resources and referrals, and complementary social services into one convenient place;
5. Create online portals, supportive print material and in-person accessible information which enables a diverse community to interact comfortably with the City (e.g. paying bills, starting City services, permitting services, recreational programming and opportunities);

6. Develop, distribute a city newsletter in the utility bill;
7. Explore incorporating space for cultural activities or a cultural center into proposed community center;
8. Work with IDE Commission to identify partner groups or organizations to sponsor annual cultural celebrations, forums or programs to promote mutual understanding, activities that promote cross-cultural mixing;
9. Review the fees and costs for City sponsored recreation and leisure activities and the Library to support all to participate;
10. Ensure there is a feedback loop to the public that provides timely, accurate information about Ellensburg Police Department's response to incidents or complaints related to IDE;
11. Continue to increase Police Department outreach efforts to ensure that officers become well known by the community; and
12. Continue to support training programs that prepare officers to safely and effectively interact with the diversity of citizens in our community.

"We can come together and see the humanity in one another."

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

This effort is a process of learning and growing. The vast majority of people living in Ellensburg truly desire a community that is welcoming, celebrates each person's unique contributions to the community, and provides equal opportunity for all. Recognizing the voices heard through the Listening Tour and incorporated in this report is a first step. Acting on what has been heard is the next. The work requires commitment and effort now and in the future.

Working together, the people of Ellensburg will build a community which ensures that all voices are heard. A community that recognizes difference as strength, and which supports each person to have the same shot at success. A community acting on those values is one which ensures economic vitality, cultural vibrancy, and a future of growth and resiliency.