



City of Ellensburg
2026 – 2046 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update
Public Participation Plan

A. Introduction

The City of Ellensburg is starting a multi-year review of its comprehensive plan, known as the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. To be compliant with state law, this update is due for final adoption by December 31, 2026. The periodic update will establish a direction for the City for the next 20 years. Communities planning under the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) are required to periodically update their Comprehensive Plan and development regulations to ensure consistency with:

- Changes to State law
- Land use changes
- Population growth projections
- Housing projections

This document describes a proposed plan for public engagement with the community members of the City of Ellensburg during this periodic update.

Ellensburg adopted its first Comprehensive Plan in 1975. The plan has been updated annually and periodically, with the last periodic update of the City's comprehensive plan completed in 2017. These updates set the stage for City policies surrounding land use, zoning, economic development, public services and utilities, environmental protection, and natural resource management.

The plan guides policies associated with:

- Population growth
- Economic development
- Housing
- Future land use
- Employment growth
- Natural resource protection
- Infrastructure projects
- General development for the next 20 years
- Climate resilience
- Recreation and open space

The update to this plan is expected to continue now through December of 2026, with multiple opportunities for public input and feedback.

B. Objectives

The City of Ellensburg seeks to listen to varied and nuanced voices in the community to determine qualities and vision for the future. In this effort we will provide a variety of methods and opportunities for community members to learn about the plan and participate in shaping the vision as the periodic update to the plan evolves.

Some of the objectives include:

- Communicate to the community with timely, engaging, easy to understand, and accurate information.
- Educate the public as to the Growth Management Act, the planning process, and data relevant to the periodic update.
- Involve the community in the identification, refinement, and prioritization of policy updates needed to guide growth and development in Ellensburg over the next 20 years.
- Ensure that community members have an opportunity to provide input on decisions related to the Comprehensive Plan update and understand how their feedback is incorporated into plans and development of regulations.
- Reach a broad and diverse range of community members and use communication strategies designed to encourage engagement of historically underrepresented community members.

C. Community Members and Interested Groups

This update will be a city-wide effort that will seek engagement with a broad and inclusive range of residents, community groups, public and private agencies, business and educational groups, and other Stakeholders as described in the table below. Public participation is a necessary and important part of the planning process and includes multiple opportunities for community members to meet with city staff and officials to discuss and develop ideas for the future.

Public participation opportunities will begin early in the process and continue throughout development of the plan. The city will utilize multiple strategies for engagement to ensure a variety of values and viewpoints are brought into the decision-making process. The goal is to build trust and mutual understanding between the City and the community by endeavoring to create a plan that is truly reflective of the varied interests and visions found in the City of Ellensburg.

Decisions about land use, environmental resources, transportation, economic development, and other topics addressed in the plan do not impact all people in the same way. In addition to traditional outreach methods and channels, staff/consultant will make an effort to seek out those voices that are historically underrepresented in the planning process. The hope is that this effort will result in a plan that is in tune with a wider range of knowledge and experiences than has historically been achieved.

| Interest Area/Organization Type | Organization Name |
|---|---|
| Elected and Appointed Officials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Council • Planning Commission • Affordable Housing Commission • Arts Commission • Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Commission • Environmental Commission • Landmarks and Design Commission • Parks and Recreation Commission • Public Transit Advisory Committee • Utility Advisory Committee |
| Tribal Nations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yakama Nation |
| Business and Employers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce • Ellensburg Downtown Association |
| Community Based Organizations & Service Organizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HopeSource • Kittitas Valley Health Network • Goodwill • Kittitas Valley Healthcare (KVH) • Court Advocates for Children of Kittitas County (CASA) |
| Environmental Advocacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kittitas Environmental Education Network • Mid-Columbia Fisheries • Kittitas County Conservation District • Kittitas Conservation Trust • Kittitas Reclamation District (KRD) • Cascade Irrigation District • Ellensburg Water Company • West Side Irrigation Company |
| Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Washington University • Ellensburg School District <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ellensburg High School ○ Morgan Middle School ○ Ida Nason Aronica Elementary ○ Lincoln Elementary ○ Mount Stuart Elementary ○ Valley View Elementary ○ Early Learning Center |
| Builders/Developers/Property Owners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Builders and Developers • Central Washington Homebuilders • Habitat for Humanity • Kittitas County Association of Realtors • Homeowner Associations • Property Owners |
| Transportation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ellensburg Central Transit • Washington State Department of Transportation |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Regulatory Agencies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washington State Department of Health • Washington State Department of Commerce • Washington State Department of Ecology • Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife • Washington State Department of Natural Resources • Kittitas County |
| Faith-Based Organizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kittitas Valley Ministerial Association |
| Utilities and Contracted Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kittitas Valley Fire and Rescue • Kittitas PUD • Puget Sound Energy • KITTCOMM |

D. Communication Methods

Community Development will initiate a community-wide open house to kick off the periodic update and to collect insight regarding community members' preferred communication methods. Engagement strategies will employ multiple communication methods to broadly reach members of the community, including:

Project Branding – Ellensburg 2046

Development of a Comprehensive Plan update brand for the City aims to create an inviting and authentic identity that captures the community's attention and encourages active engagement. The goal is to design a brand that reflects both the City's current character and its future vision. This project brand will signal to Ellensburg residents an opportunity to envision the future of Ellensburg while fostering engagement and emphasizing a commitment to staying rooted in the community. The package will include a project logo, name, and typography as an easy way to identify the project's communication while ensuring it is accessible and flexible. This project brand will be complementary to the current City of Ellensburg branding and is only intended to be utilized for the 2026 – 2046 Comprehensive Plan Update.

Print Materials

Printed materials such as mailers, factsheets, flyers, and postcards will be used to share project information, timelines, and announcements about engagement activities and public events related to the comprehensive planning process. The materials will utilize the project brand and will be written in plain language to be easy to digest and understand. Initial materials will include a 2026 – 2046 Comprehensive Plan Update flyer that describes the process, timeline, and ways to connect with project staff, and provide comments or questions. Topic specific materials may be created to further explore middle housing, climate, or other technical aspects. Printed materials will be distributed through in-person engagement activities or postal mail channels. They can also be linked as digital copies on the project website or social media sites.

Digital Materials

Digital materials encompass information shared via digital channels, such as the project website, social media posts, and online open houses. Digital materials will be used in addition to print materials to ensure we are reaching the broadest possible range of the community. A project webpage will be created to host information specific to the 2026 – 2046 Comprehensive Plan Update as part of the City's website. Existing City social media channels include Facebook, X, Instagram, and YouTube.

website and can be made accessible through screen readers and translated via online translation services. Digital content may also include paid advertising boosts that are targeted to specific online communities or groups.

A key component of the digital outreach includes use of a community engagement platform that will serve as a project hub, and which will allow for interactive engagement with the public through use of surveys and dissemination of information.

Media

The City will utilize media releases and outreach to announce the project milestones and to advertise key opportunities for public participation. Communication channels may include The Daily Record, KXLE Radio, Ellensburg Community Radio, City newsletters, City utility bills, and other local publications.

Comment Forms

The public will be able to submit comments and questions specific to the 2026 – 2046 Comprehensive Plan Update via an online comment form on the 2026 – 2046 Comprehensive Plan Update webpage. Comments will also be accepted via written formats such as emails or hand-written letters. Printed comment forms will be available at engagement events. Comments and summaries of engagement events will be tracked in a communication database and summarized as part of the community engagement summary and distributed to decision makers at key milestones in the process.

Email Communication

Email distribution lists maintained by the City in addition to a contact list developed as part the engagement program for the 2026 – 2046 Comprehensive Plan update will be used to distribute periodic emails with project updates, or to announce upcoming engagement opportunities.

Language Translation

Printed materials will be available in translated languages upon request. Translators and ASL interpreters will be available upon request at in-person meetings or events. Information for how to request translated materials or an interpreter will be included on printed mailers and flyers.

Public Noticing Requirements

Public notices for all engagement activities associated with the Comprehensive Plan Update will conform to existing public noticing requirements for the City of Ellensburg.

E. Public Involvement Opportunities

Digital and Social Media

Community Development will utilize the city web presence to advertise the various public input opportunities described below. Through the city website and social media accounts, the public will be informed of participation opportunities as well as the status of the update as it evolves. Community Development will utilize the existing Comprehensive Plan web page to keep the public informed about the process and benchmarks.

Focus Groups

Community Development will utilize small, diverse groups of people to discuss particular topics and issues. Staff/consultants will guide the discussions, asking questions and encouraging interaction amongst the participants. The goal of focus groups is to gather a range of opinions, attitudes, and perceptions about the topic to provide insight into the collective input of the community.

Listening Sessions

Community Development will also utilize listening sessions, which are similar to focus groups but tend to be more open-ended and informal. These sessions will be designed to create a space where participants can share their thoughts, experiences, and concerns on a particular topic, in their own words and at their own pace. The focus will be on understanding the participants' experiences and perspectives rather than guiding the discussion.

Surveys

Community Development will solicit input from the public through a community survey. This survey will be distributed through various methods to reach as many residents as possible. The goal will be to identify issues and determine the priorities of the community through the next 20 years. Additional surveys may be used for issue-specific subjects.

Community Workshops and Open Houses

Community Development will seek input from community groups, stakeholders, and residents through presentations of draft material throughout the process. These workshops will be advertised through various methods to encourage a broad range of participants. The workshops and open houses will include both in-person and virtual options. The presentations will address a variety of topics and will be designed to elicit feedback and inspire a sense of plan ownership among community members.

Written Comments

Written comments will be accepted by interested parties throughout the update process. Staff will accept public comments at any time prior to recommendation and adoption hearings, in addition to the formal comment periods associated with the recommendation and adoption hearings.

Planning Commission Meetings

The City will utilize regularly scheduled Planning Commission meetings to serve as study sessions throughout the update process. The public will be encouraged to attend and offer input during these regular meetings.

The Planning Commission is a seven-member advisory group that meets the second Thursday of each month. When necessary, the Planning Commission will hold additional meetings on the fourth Thursday of each month. All Planning Commission meetings begin at 5:45pm and can be attended in-person in the Council Chambers at 501 N. Anderson or attended virtually via an agenda link provided on the city website.

City Boards and Commission Meetings

The city maintains a variety of commissions representing various city interests that meet on a regular basis. These commissions are made up of community members who have exhibited an interest in the subjects they represent. Some of these commissions include:

- Environmental Commission
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Commission
- Landmarks & Design Commission
- Affordable Housing Commission
- Parks & Recreation Commission

Community Development will work with these commissions to draw on their expertise to inform our update. Additionally, Community Development will utilize the comment opportunities for each of these commissions to receive community feedback from attendees.

F. Engagement Strategies

The following table describes the public engagement strategies that will be implemented throughout Ellensburg's Comprehensive Plan update process. The table includes identification of the intended audience, and level of involvement the activity will achieve, using the International Association's Public Participation (IAP2) engagement spectrum.

The IAP2 Spectrum is an internationally recognized model developed to help clarify the role of the public in planning and decision making, and how much influence the community has over planning or decision-making processes. The model identifies five levels of community engagement, ordered as follows by increasing impact on the decision making: (1) Inform; (2) Consult; (3) Involve; (4) Collaborate; and (5) Empower.

| Strategy | IAP2 Level | Description |
|-------------------|-----------------|---|
| Open House | Inform/Consult | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Periodic Update Kickoff<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ What is a Comprehensive Plan update?○ Visioning for the next 20 years○ How the public can get involved• Open Houses to share analysis, draft policies, and plan development |
| Workshops | Consult/Involve | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workshops designed around particular topics such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Climate Change and Resiliency○ Parks and Recreation Planning○ Envisioning the future of Ellensburg |
| Public Meetings | Consult | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Hearings• Adoption of 2026 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update |
| Information Booth | Inform/Consult | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Events (to be determined)<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Ellensburg Farmer's Market○ Kittitas County Fair and Rodeo○ Bite of the 'Burg○ First Friday Art Walks○ Ellensburg Holiday Market |
| Online Survey | Consult | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visioning Survey• Specific Topic-Focused Survey, i.e., Housing |

| | | |
|--|---------------------|--|
| Canvassing | Inform | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target specific neighborhoods and businesses to inform about engagement opportunities |
| Outreach through Community-based organizations | Involve/Collaborate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize existing relationships and partnerships to share project information and gather feedback from specific groups and communities |
| Community Interviews | Consult/Involve | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue-specific interviews with industry and technical experts. Topics could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate Housing Other |
| Focus Groups | Involve/Collaborate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small, diverse groups of people to discuss particular topics and issues. Gather a range of opinions, attitudes, and perceptions about the topic to provide insight into the collective input of the community. |
| Listening Sessions | Involve/Collaborate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open-ended sessions where participants can share their thoughts, experiences, and concerns on a particular topic, in order to understand the participants' experiences and perspectives. |

G. Project Timeline

Phase 1 – Scoping

Community Development will begin the process by gathering and analyzing information to create a conceptual framework for the update. This will involve an analysis of current conditions and Growth Management Act requirements to establish a baseline in which to move forward. The scoping effort will include written comment opportunities provided through the city web site and social media accounts. It will also include a community survey, distributed through a variety of methods, to capture perceptions and priorities of the community.

Objectives

- Build early project awareness.
- Gather community ideas, priorities, and concerns.
- Establish baseline information associated with development patterns and population forecasts.
- Review and inventory Growth Management requirements and necessary legislative updates.

Timeframe

July 2025 – November 2025

Public Participation Opportunities/Strategies

- Community survey
- Open house and workshops
- Outreach to Community Based Organizations
- Information booths at community events

Phase 2 – Draft Policies and Plan

Phase 2 will involve drafting Comprehensive Plan chapters to be created and presented to the public

through engagement opportunities to solicit feedback and ensure that the community's priorities are included in the draft plan. As chapters are developed, Community Development will attend various city commission meetings to introduce the chapters and request feedback.

Objectives

- Share analysis findings.
- Seek input on proposed goals, policies, regulations, and plan strategies.
- Develop draft chapters of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Regularly inform the community about the development of plans and policies and timelines for decisions.

Timeframe

July 2025 – June 2026

Public Participation Opportunities/Strategies

- Public meetings
- Open house or workshops
- Mailers
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Listening sessions
- Outreach to Community Based Organizations

Phase 3 – Final Review and Adoption

Phase 3 will involve multiple Planning Commission study sessions to perform final review and revisions to the draft plans. This phase will include an Open House to present the proposed final product to the public before it is brought to the City Council. The Planning Commission will review each chapter and provide public comment opportunities. The Planning Commission will make a recommendation on the Comprehensive Plan update to City Council during a duly noticed public hearing. The Planning Commission recommendation will be brought before the City Council for plan adoption. Community Development will initiate the required 60-day notice to Commerce and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review.

Objectives

- Review draft plans and policies.
- Continue building periodic update understanding and buy-in.
- City Council adoption of the 2026 – 2046 City of Ellensburg periodic update to the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations.

Timeframe

March 2026 – December 2026

Public Participation Opportunities

- Open House
- Public Hearings