

AGENDA

PLANNING COMMISSION

October 23, 2025

Hybrid Meeting In-person and via Zoom



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**CITY OF ELLENSBURG
PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA
Council Chambers
501 North Anderson Street
Ellensburg, WA 98926
And remotely via Zoom
Thursday, October 23, 2025
5:45 PM - Regular Meeting**

- 1. Call to Order and Roll Call of Members**
- 2. Approval of Agenda (No Public Comment)**
- 3. Approval of Minutes**
 - 3.A September 11, 2025 Planning Commission Minutes
 - 3.B October 9, 2025 Meeting Minutes
- 4. New Business**
 - 4.A Comprehensive Plan Amendment 25-02.001-.308 Study Session
- 5. Unfinished Business**
- 6. Public Comment**
- 7. Staff Update/Discussion Items**
- 8. Commission Representative Update**
- 9. Adjournment**



For more information on the Ellensburg Planning Commission, contact Planning Manager, Stacey Henderson, at 509-962-7232.

The Contents of this agenda have been photocopied on recycled paper.



Meeting Date: October 23, 2025
City of Ellensburg
Planning Commission Agenda Report

Agenda Subject: September 11, 2025 Planning Commission Minutes
Submitted by:
Department: Community Development

Suggested Motion/Action:
Move to approve the September 11, 2025 Planning Commission minutes

Background/Summary:

Previous Council Action:

Analysis:

Financial Impact:

Budget Adjustment: No

Attachments:

1. 9.11.25 PC minutes



CITY OF ELLENSBURG

Date of Meeting

Time of Meeting

Place of Meeting

Minutes of Planning Commission, Regular Meeting

September 11, 2025

5:45 PM

Council Chambers

501 North Anderson Street

Ellensburg, WA 98926

And remotely via Zoom

1. Call to Order and Roll Call of Members

Commissioner Harrell called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m.

Present: Michael Buehn, Ed Harrell, Geraldine O'Mahony, Sathy Rajendran; Joe Sheeran, Skylar Bisom-Rapp

Absent: George Bottcher

Others Present: Stacey Henderson-Planning Manager; Dan Carlson-Community Development Director; Kathy Boots-Planning Technician; David Miller-City Council Liaison; one member of the public

2. Approval of Agenda

Staff introduced new Commissioners, Bisom-Rapp and Sheeran.

Commissioner O'Mahony motioned to approve the agenda with one addition which was to add voting for a Vice President under the New Business section of the Agenda. Motion passed 6-0.

3. Approval of Minutes

3.A Review of May 22, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Rajendaran motioned to approve the minutes from the May 22, 2025, meeting. Commissioner O'Mahony motioned to have two items from the May 22, 2025, meeting minutes to be removed. Delano Palmer needs to be removed from the roll call and removed from O'Mahony's motion to excuse the absence of Delano Palmer. Motion passed 5-0 (Skylar Bisom-Rapp abstained from the vote since he had not been approved as a Commissioner for that meeting).

3.B Review of July 10, 2025 JOINT PC-AHC Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Sheeran motioned to approve the minutes from the July 10, 2025, meeting. Motion passed 5-0. (Skylar Bisom-Rapp abstained from voting since he had not been approved to be a Commissioner for that meeting).

4. New Business

A. Election of Vice Chair of the Planning Commission for 2025

Commissioner Buehn nominated himself as Vice Chair. No other nominations were made. Motion passed 6-0.

5. Unfinished Business

None.

6. Citizen Comment

None.

7. Staff Update/Discussion Items

7.A Update on Annual Comprehensive Plan Docketing

Staff member Stacey Henderson informed the Commission members that there are two items docketed for the Annual Comprehensive Plan update. 25-01 City of Ellensburg Annual six-year Capital Improvement Plan update 25-02 Removal of DEI Chapter 9 in the Comprehensive Plan. Braver Angels has been selected to facilitate community meetings. There have been two community meetings held, each lasting two hours in length. A third meeting is scheduled for October 4, 2025, for a six and a half hour conversation. The meeting on October 4, 2025, will consist of six members of the public representing each side of the issue. A limited number of observers for each side will be present along with Braver Angels and City Planning staff. The results of the meeting will be brought back before the Planning Commission to make a recommendation to the City Council. The November 13, 2025, meeting will be a public meeting where the public can provide testimony on Chapter 9 of the Comprehensive Plan. Options to move the proposal forward were discussed. City Council will hold a study session on November 29, 2025.

7.B Update on 2026 Periodic Update Public Outreach and Progress

Henderson informed the Commission that meetings with City Staff and a consultant had taken place. The Consultant will be doing a land capacity study. Public outreach will be started with a table at the farmer's market on two occasions. There will be an open house on September 17, 2025. A table will be displayed at Bite of the Burg and Busker's. Flyers that have been created were shown along with a coloring contest of the Bull. Public events will be announced on social media, EDA, radio, and at schools.

7.C Update on 2025 Code Amendments

Stacey Henderson let the Commission know that code changes will come before the Planning Commission on October 9, 2025. The members will receive the two citizen's proposed code amendment applications prior to the meeting as part of the staff report. Land Development code cleanup will be reviewed. Co-living housing code changes mandated by the State House bill will be reviewed. Recommendations will be made to City Council for November 2025.

8. Commission Representative Update

David Miller stated the City Council will review the second reading of the proposed ADU code amendments. At the last City Council meeting there was discussion over audio and video tapping of all Commission meetings. Providing the information for the hearing

impaired, visually impaired, and transcripts would need to be considered along with staff maintenance and costs. Live stream vs zoom were discussed.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.



Meeting Date: October 23, 2025
City of Ellensburg
Planning Commission Agenda Report

Agenda Subject: October 9, 2025 Meeting Minutes
Submitted by:
Department: Community Development

Suggested Motion/Action:
Move to approve October 9, 2025 Planning Commission meeting minutes

Background/Summary:

Previous Council Action:

Analysis:

Financial Impact:

Budget Adjustment: No

Attachments:

1. 10.9.25 PC minutes



CITY OF ELLENSBURG

Date of Meeting

Time of Meeting

Place of Meeting

Minutes of Planning Commission, Regular Meeting

October 9, 2025

5:45 PM

Council Chambers

501 North Anderson Street

Ellensburg, WA 98926

And remotely via Zoom

1. Call to Order and Roll Call of Members

Commissioner Harrell called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m.

Present: Michael Buehn, Ed Harrell, Geraldine O'Mahony, George Bottcher, Sathy Rajendran; Delano Palmer, Skylar Bisom-Rapp

Absent:

Others Present: Stacey Henderson-Planning Manager; Dan Carlson-CDS Director; Mark Rud-Associate Planner; Lily Frey-Housing Program Manager; Kathy Boots-Planning Technician

2. Approval of Agenda (No Public Comment)

Commissioner Rajendran motioned to approve the agenda. Motion passed 7-0.

3. Approval of Minutes

No minutes available for review.

4. New Business

4.A Public Hearing to Consider 2025 Land Development Code Amendments

The public hearing for the 2025 Land Development Code (LDC) Amendments opened. Stacey Henderson, Planning Manager, read a staff report outlining the proposed amendments, and reviewed timelines for SEPA, City Council, appeal period, and Department of Commerce.

1. P25-033 Citizen proposed temporary use exemption addition to ECC 15.250.010 Temporary Use Permit process and requirements.

2. Community Development Department proposed amendments to address required HB 1998 Co-Living Housing requirements.

3. Community Development Department proposed Title 15 Code Clean Up

Staff finds that the proposed amendments are in accordance with the three decision criteria as described in ECC 15.250.100(C).

Staff recommends approval of the code amendments as presented.

No testimony or public comment. Staff had nothing to add. Commissioners asked several questions. Public comment closed.

Commissioner Rajendran moved to approve the 2025 Land Development Code amendments with three revisions as proposed:

1. 15.130.110: add “Kitchenette” definition
2. 15.250.010(E): revise staff’s temporary use exemption draft terminology as proposed by DR Horton in correspondence
3. 15.250.010(E): strike requirements for a minimum number of lots or dwelling units for exempt temporary display or sales office

Commissioner Bisom-Rapp moved to amend the original motion to include the following:

1. 15.130.030: include reference to for-sale dwellings in the “Co-living housing” definition
2. 15.250.010(E): strike leasing office from all proposals, and provide the same 3-year timeline for multifamily ownership dwellings as proposed for subdivisions
3. 15.260.080: strike proposed additions that would restrict phasing to long subdivisions only (permits phasing for all subdivisions, including short subdivisions)
4. 15.260.170(C): strike proposed subsection 4 in its entirety (removes entire code Section from amending ordinance)
5. Table 15.310.040-2: add to Note 5 that multifamily leasing or management office is permitted for R-H multifamily dwellings on the property
6. Table 15.310.040-2: revise “Private parking lot” to Conditional Use in C-H & RC-MU instead of Permitted Use as proposed
7. Table 15.320.030: retain Note 11 for R-H side yard instead of striking as proposed
8. 15.320.080: add requirement for 5-foot minimum property line separation for rear yards in subsections C and D to account for DADUs
9. 15.540.040(C)(2): add clarifying language that 15-foot DADU separation from the principal unit is considered a yard for the purpose of projections pursuant to 15.320.080

No discussion on the amended motion. Amended motion passed 7-0.

No further discussion on the original motion. The original motion as amended passed 7-0.

5. Unfinished Business

Commissioner Bisom-Rapp gave an update that he will be working on gathering the diversity in planning language from the American Planning Association.

Clarification was provided that a staff report with the original and amended motion of the 2025 Land Development Code Amendments will be one document that is provided to the City Council.

6. Public Comment

None.

7. Staff Update/Discussion Items

- 7.A October 23, 2025 Planning Commission Study Session
October 23, 2025, will be the next meeting and there will be a study session to discuss what was learned at the workshops on the DEI proposal and to determine options to be recommended to the City Council. On October 20, 2025, staff will get direction from the City Council regarding DEI. Henderson will see if the Chair of the DEI Commission would be available to come to the study session in case the Commissioners have questions.

8. Commission Representative Update

David Miller is at the APA conference and is unavailable to provide updates.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:47 p.m.



Meeting Date: October 23, 2025
City of Ellensburg
Planning Commission Agenda Report

Agenda Subject: Comprehensive Plan Amendment 25-02.001-.308 Study Session

Submitted by:
Department: Community Development

Suggested Motion/Action:
STUDY SESSION

Background/Summary:

On July 21, 2025, staff presented the annual comp plan amendment requests for possible docketing and adoption in 2025. At the July docketing meeting, staff proposed that Council docket item 25-02.001-.308, and move forward with the proposed Community Conversations and Common Ground Workshop, with suggested paths forward to be brought back to Council for consideration.

The proposed amendment 25-02 will go before the Planning Commission with a public hearing on November 13, 2025, for an official recommendation to Council regarding possible adoption. Due to the high level of community engagement and concern regarding this item, staff supported the idea of having a study session addressing this process, to answer questions, and get the commission up to speed before the November hearing.

Previous Council Action:

At the July 21, 2025 Council meeting, the motion was approved 5-2 to docket item 25-02.001-.308 as proposed. The motion gave staff direction to move forward with conducting the two community conversations and common ground workshop, and to bring additional information and possible next steps back to Council.

Staff brought the information learned and next steps back to council on October 20, 2025. Staff requested guidance, of which Council recommended that staff move forward with preparation of a replacement chapter that addresses topics, concerns, and agreements from the workshop process. A majority of Council selected action 3 from staff proposed actions 1-6, which was to rewrite the chapter.

Analysis:

In preparation for the hearing, between the October 23 study session and the November 13 hearing, staff has provided relevant documents for your review as Exhibits 1-7.

Community Conversation Exhibits:

- Exhibit 1: Data gathered from the Community Conversations in favor of removing Chapter 9-DEI
- Exhibit 2: Data gathered from the Community Conversations in favor of keeping Chapter 9-DEI
- Exhibit 3: The final pre-read arguments formulated from data gathered at the community conversations.

Common Ground Workshop Exhibits:

- Exhibit 4: Common Ground Workshop agreement document

Additional Exhibits:

- Exhibit 5: Existing Chapter 9 DEI
- Exhibit 6: ECC 15.250.090 Comprehensive Plan Amendments- Type V Review Process
- Exhibit 7: Staff Report from October 20, 2025 Council Meeting, which includes:
 - Staff analysis regarding Workshop Limitations and Facilitator Insights
 - Staff analysis regarding the pre-read arguments
 - Staff analysis and possible future actions regarding the final agreement
 - Full range of possible actions for Council to select at October 20 meeting

Council Guidance and Next Steps:

Staff was given direction by Council to develop a replacement chapter, with the understanding that this most likely will need to be completed during the periodic update in 2026. With this action, Chapter 9 would remain in place in the comprehensive plan until a new replacement chapter is created and agreed upon for adoption by council.

A near-term action that resulted from comments received throughout the process, and Council's discussion on October 20, revolved around the public's questions and concerns about complying with federal law and maintaining federal funding. Staff plans to propose a slightly revised Chapter 9 at the 2025 hearing that addresses the public's concerns, but also allows the City to remain in compliance with state and federal law and guidance.

The long-term action agreed upon includes continuing community conversations and additional revisions to the chapter during the 2026 periodic update. This will allow for agreeable concepts from different perspectives, goals in the existing chapter, and information gathered during future engagement in 2026, to be incorporated into the new chapter. This approach, approved by the majority of council, allowed for a more custom chapter to address Ellensburg's needs.

Staff Proposal:

At the hearing, staff plans to provide the planning commission with two options for review and recommendation.

The first option being to repeal the chapter. Although no members of council appeared to consider that option at the October 20 meeting, this option is related to the original application requests submitted in March. Therefore, this option needs to continue to be an option for review, and applicants and the public shall have an opportunity to speak to their request at the public hearings throughout the process.

The second option being the council recommended option, to replace the chapter during the 2026 periodic update process. Approving this option includes both the near term and long term action as explained above; 1) Approving the draft revised chapter with preliminary edits to address the public's concerns and remain in compliance with state and federal law and guidance, and 2) continuing communication conversations and revisions to this chapter during the 2026 periodic update.

Planning Commission Action:

At the November 13 Planning Commission hearing, the planning commission shall make a recommendation to City council, per the available options as listed in ECC 15.250.090(D)(6). Options for elaboration, modification, or clarification to accompany the recommendation are possible.

At the hearing, the planning commission will be provided with two possible options for recommendations, and shall select one.

- Repeal Chapter 9 as proposed in the docket applications
- Leave Chapter 9 and replace with revised chapter in 2026.

The approval shall take the form of:

1. Approval in the form submitted for public hearing;
2. Approval with changes;
3. Approval in part; or
4. Disapproval

At the subsequent Council Hearing, they will then make one of the following decisions:

1. Approval in accordance with the findings and recommendations submitted by the planning commission;
2. Approval with modifications;
3. Refer all or part of the plan text or map amendment proposal back to the planning commission;
4. Refer all or part of the plan text or map amendment proposal to the following year's annual amendment process; or
5. Disapprove.

Financial Impact:

The costs of administering the annual Comprehensive Plan amendment process are included in the 2025 Community Development budget.

Budget Adjustment: No

Attachments:

1. Exhibit 1_Community Conversation Data Remove
2. Exhibit 2_Community Conversation Data Keep/Modify
3. Exhibit 3_Pre-Read
4. Exhibit 4_Workshop Agreement
5. Exhibit 5_Chapter 9 DEI
6. Exhibit 6_ECC 15.250.090 Comprehensive Plan Amendments
7. Exhibit 7_October 20 Staff Report

Remove DEI Chapter Of Comprehensive Plan

1. Government Scope & Role Concerns: City government should focus on essential services rather than social policy initiatives. The proper role of local government is to provide core municipal services.

- "Remove all DEI policies from the city's plans, operations, hiring and objectives"
- "Remove Chapter. Remove all goals, policies and programs related to DEI"

Comments added 8/20: Dots: 16 green, 5 red

Post its:

- *Traditional services EMS, Police, Roads Water, Sewage, Electricity*
- *Define "essential services" - replace with "traditional"*
- *DEI chapter not needed. Many WA municipalities have a climate of being friendly & welcoming. Look at those Comp. Plans & write a NEW chap. to celebrate Diversity & Inclusivity.*
- *List the "essential" and/or "traditional" services so we all know what we're talking about.*
- *Terms need defined. We have 2 very different views for essential services w/pro & con.*
- *DEI is very political and should not be inserted into our city plan. It is divisive for that reason. It is a leftist, progressive political concept. It excludes people on the conservative side*
- *People can still believe & support practice, but it should not be forced by government.*
- *Role of Government should be explained clearly to help eliminate confusion & create clearer lines. That doesn't mean re-write gov. role to help push agendas.*
- *To be projected onto our children, shoved down our throat. It's in our face everywhere. Now you want to "mandate" our acceptance, because ppl are glared at? You cannot mandate ppl to be nice*
- *We are not against Diversity, access to Services, Kindness. DEI is not about that. It is not for black, Brown, white or DNA expression. It is All about LBQTQ+ agenda*
- ***Full Typed Sheet:** (**this was a pre-prepared print out that was adhered to this poster*) 1) *The DEI chapter in the Comprehensive Plan does not belong there because the Comprehensive Plan is required by the Growth Management Act and directs the city regarding land use and growth management. It is not for something that is about thoughts and feelings and how people treat each other."*

"2) The DEI Chapter and commission should not be part of city government. It is not the place of an activist city council member to be using the city's commission structure to broadcast her moral faultfinding of the people of Ellensburg on social media and into the policies and procedures of city government."

"3) The DEI Commission has only ever allowed like-minded people and is one of the most uninclusive, undiverse, and undemocratic commissions in the city."

"4) Government should not be in the business of policing thoughts and feelings. Equity is decided upon by the DEI Commission in ways that are based in opinion, not fact."

"5) The argument that the ADA is equivalent to DEI is faulty because in order to be covered by the ADA, you must have proof that you require assistance by providing extensive documented evidence. It is not easy to receive ADA assistance, and it should not be. Only those who can prove a disability should receive assistance because they are receiving public funds. The DEI Commission relies solely on people's word and then shows scorn and outrage to anyone who questions them."

"6) The allegations of discrimination made by the people contacted by the DEI Commission in their listening tours are all only anecdotal with no documented proof. They may or may not be true. However, the argument against pressing them for proof is that even the slightest doubt that what they say is true is damaging to their mental health. This is a strawman argument. Discrimination is fully illegal in the whole of the United States, and if it is happening then it should be prosecuted in a court of law and should be provable through documentation. The DEI Commission is not the place to bring it."

"7) Even this meeting tonight is being couched as emotionally difficult for those who support the DEI Commission staying in city government. Those who support keeping DEI in the government structure should prepare to constantly be advocating for it and proving it is essential. They have had five years and have not done so yet."

"8) Public money should not be funneled to the DEI Commission. The way they spend the money they receive from the city is mostly on themselves for 'retreats'. It is given to their personal friends and political comrades, and even, at one point, a large portion of it was given to one of the commission members – almost five thousand dollars! They have not used the money to assist any of the physically disabled people in Ellensburg."

"9) Finally, if the volunteers on the DEI Commission want to organize as a private group and collect voluntary donations from the public to advance their agenda, they are free to

do that. The DEI Commission should not be part of city government and it should not receive taxpayer funding."

Comments added 9/6/25: Dots 25 green, 2 red

Post its:

- *The city should affirm its commitment to avoid discrimination and increase accessibility. But doing so in the Comp Plan is an unnecessary distraction from essential functions.*
- *Does The DEI Commission Equitably represent this Community? Conservative vs Liberal, male vs female, LGBTQ+ vs Straight, Christian vs non Christian Family vs Retired.. No it does it not? How can it be diverse>*
- *By focusing on a select few "specific groups" we inadvertently leave out other specific groups. This is prejudice*
- *The average citizen, esp. traditional Christians have had to form unofficial groups, banding together for common causes such as fixing our pools or asking for a more robust mental health resources. We constantly have to petition the city. We don't have a special group chaired by a city council member and are definitely not represented by the DEI Commission. All of the equity that the DEI Commission claims has been enshrined in the many laws that we were established decades ago for. It's the city's responsibility to represent all and follow laws.*
- *DEI can beans often is ideologically Not inclusive. DEI is supposed to be about tolerance but it's all to often forced conformity*
- *Any social policy being supported should be widely & robustly supported by empirical research as being beneficial. Contested policies without sound research support should not be supported.*
- *No group "DEI" should be put in place to drive an agenda that impacts community & their position is biased to select sector of our community*
- *Local gov't is under obligation to treat all citizens equally regardless of immutable characteristics. Any discrimination is already illegal*
- *It's not, How is it equitable - It's not, How is in inclusive - It's not. .[not legible]*
- *I don't think that 'Section 9: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion' should be a part of the city's comprehensive plan. The city's position should be more neutral and include the equal treatment of ALL people and citizens living within its boundaries, not specific groups."*

2. Legal Authority Concerns: DEI policies may create legal risks for the city and exceed proper municipal authority. Compliance with federal guidelines should be prioritized.

- "Complete REVISION of Chapter 9. Remove Existing Text and replace. To bring us into compliance with Federal Laws and Policy"

Comments added 8/20: DOTS 9 green, 6 red

Post its:

- *We already have a disability act say Ellensburg uphold the ADA and concentrate rate of equality.*
 - *Loss of federal funding*
-

Comments added 9/6/25: Dots 16 green, 0 red

Post its:

- *The Spotted Owl decision made by Justice Dwyer was based on government hierarchy not issues. The DEI has been ended by the federal gov't If the city continues with the DEI commission they are violating federal law and putting the city at risk of legal action from the federal government. Not a good use of taxpayer dollars.*
 - *DEI often cross the line into Social Engineering. Threaten Parental Rights & Standards dividing us by race & gender*
 - *financially irresponsible*
 - *naming process for Unity Park went against the community vote*
-

3. Budget & Spending Concerns: Public funds should be directed toward essential city services rather than DEI programs and commission activities.

- "Chapter 9; DEI Commission; all DEI Policies; removed of the Comprehensive Plan; funding of commission and any related groups stopped"

Comments added 8/20: DOTS 6 green, 0 red

No- Post-It notes

Comments added 9/6/25: 16 green, 0 red

Post its:

- Comp. plan is for land use & annexing County parcels into city for development. Social engineering programs don't belong in the Comp plan. The whole community needs to be represented equally, to make eburg great for everyone.
- Pizza Klatch and similar orgs are not essential to all ellensburg citizens

4. General Opposition to DEI: DEI concepts and policies should be eliminated from city government entirely.

- "Remove DEI"
- "Eliminate and get rid of all DEI plans and policies"
- "Remove All sections that allow DEI Commission to Exist"

Comments added 8/20: DOTS 7 green, 3 red

Post its:

- *"DEI is not a concept. It is an ideology & Religion."*
- *DEI is Marxism*
- *The Protections "provided" by DEI exist in America Legislature and the constitution. That Chapter 9 of Ellensburg Comp. Plan Area is redundant and unnecessary*
- *DEI is divisive, which is the reason this is even happening.*
- *It opens the door to policies that could harm women and children.*
- *Reverse discrimination is still discrimination. [NOTE: This appears to have a red dot attached]*
- *The inclusion of LGBTQ+ requires a moral position that the city should not broach, doing so excludes a large constituency of the city - Churches who have differing opinions of LGBTQ+*
- *The City Did not do an adequate job supporting the inclusion of chapter 9*
- *The concepts and premises are not compatible with the freedoms elucidated in our founding documents*

Email received by City Friday August 22

"DEI is a strictly democrat party controlled tool for their extreme ideologies. There is no way to reach

common ground when the entire concept of DEI is designed solely around democrat narrative and control."

The DEI commission does not represent a worldview other than extreme liberalism. DEI, as it has been wielded throughout our nation, has been used as a weapon by the democrat party for extreme policies. Enshrining DEI into the city comprehensive plan empowers one political party and their extremist ideologies, which I feel has the potential to greatly harm women and children."

Comments added 9/6/25: DOTS 11 green, 6 red

Post its:

- *DEI - places our city at risk - lawsuits - lost funding*
- *DEI Promotes Group Identity over individual rights or identity DEI Focuses too much on dividing people into groups. Families see this as divisive and shaming. Harmful to children's sense of self worth.*
- *Though "DEI" as specifically described in Chapter 9 may come across as condescending and patronizing, the city must provide non-discrimination & accessibility [red dot attached]*
- *DEI Political / Policies or training programs Consistently consisting opinions, Assisted traditional values or compare people to use specific language*
- *Policies that Allow people to choose bathrooms or locker rooms based on gender identity rather than biological are placing one group rights over another*
- *inclusive means All have a voice And Safe to speak not just those who follow or ideological line*
- *Equity language should be present throughout ALL policies and Remove Chapter 9 completely [red dot attached]*
- *There are beneficial policies w/in chapter 9 Modification would potentially benefit coming to common ground. Being Con to DEI doesn't mean unwillingness to compromise or keep policies*

NEW POSTER CREATED 8/20

5. Remove DEI Language

Existing protections already exist in the constitution

DEI is not required as a part of the plan

No other city has a DEI chapter.

Comments added 8/20 DOTS 1 green, 0 red

Post its:

- *Can we just be a city that does right by our citizens? We want public transit. We want to accommodate our elderly and disabled. We want to be a city that upholds Constitutional rights, ADA, etc. So we can love and serve our neighbors well. "DEI" as seen about LGBTQ as it's being represented in discussions or the current discussions is overwhelmingly about the side of diversity LGBTQ+ community and here are concerns that Chapter 9 is a "trojan horse" attempting to push execute the LGBTQ+ agenda under the cover of initiatives everyone already agrees with (Building or public transit, upholding constitutional rights, accommodating ADA, etc.).*
 - *Ch. 9 DEI is a Trojan horse that will further place women and children at risk of harm just like WAC 162-32-060 (which had no objection to men/transwomen in public women's room BECAUSE it never crossed anyone's mind that it would be used that way.*
 - *Comp Plan required Elements 1 Land use 2 Housing 3 Transportation 4 Capital Facilities 5 Utilities 6 Rural Development Parks and Rec 7Climate Chapter *NEW*
DEI IS NOT Required Element*
-

New Poster Created 8/20/25

6. Constitutional Protections Already Exist: Existing constitutional protections and federal laws already provide adequate safeguards without additional DEI policies. DEI chapters are not required elements of comprehensive plans and other cities operate successfully without them.

“Existing protections already exist in the constitution”

- “DEI is not required as a part of the plan”
- “No other city has a DEI chapter”
- “Can we just be a city that does right by our citizens? We want public transit. We want to accommodate our elderly and disabled. We want to be a city that upholds Constitutional rights, ADA, etc.”
- “Chapter 9 is a trojan horse attempting to push execute the LGBTQ+ agenda under the cover of initiatives everyone already agrees with”
- “Ch. 9 DEI is a Trojan horse that will further place women and children at risk of harm”

Comments added 9/6/25: 22 green, 1 red

Post its:

- ADA already addresses some of the items DEI claims they want to do. Unnecessary & duplicative [NOTE: This has a red dot attached]

- green stick- [NOTE: Text appears incomplete]
 - The Civil Rights Act of 1964 signed by Pres. Johnson eliminated discrimination We do Not need DEI for special people.
 - DEI propagates viewing people through a lens of prejudice. This is detrimental to our community
 - DEI IS FOUNDED ON CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND IS NOT COMPATIBLE WITH OUR NATIONS FOUNDING PRINCIPLES OF INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM
 - DEI IS ROOTED IN NEO-MARXISM [NOTE: This appears to continue on another post-it that's partially visible]
 - Trojan horse fears are overblown given that the DEI Commission has no executive authority.
 - Children are NOT Being protected!! allowing open Public changing rooms / Bathrooms exposes children to people that might harm them. Men should be in men's rooms, women and children safe in protected rooms, and create a third space if needed.
 - Accessibility to public spaces is already protected under ADA regulations. It is disingenuous to conflate ADA with DEI
-

NEW POSTER: 8/20

7. Process/ Protocols

City of Ellensburg accepted arguments written past the deadline.

Comments added 8/20 DOTS: 0 green, 0 Red

Post it:

- *To take into consideration our comprehensive plan. This deadline was set by the city*

Poster re-drafted before 9/6 workshop

7. Deadline and Process Violations: The city failed to follow its own established procedures and deadlines in handling comprehensive plan amendment applications, raising questions about fair and consistent administration.

- “City of Ellensburg accepted arguments written past the deadline”
- “This deadline was set by the city”

Comments added 9/6/2025: DOTS: 11 green, 1 red

Post its:

- The semi- anonymous petition submitted to the city as a response to this issue should not be given the same weight as the correctly submitted proposals
 - This did occur and no forms should have been accepted or factored into how many for or against.
 - When proposals are are submitted on requested forms and by a requested time they should have more weight than forms submitted after deadline.
 - This sounds like an insincere legislative obstructionism, not an authentic principle or position (red dot here)
-

NEW POSTER 9/6/25

8. Implementation Concerns: How DEI is being implemented in Ellensburg. Disenfranchises certain people, elevates others (e.g. Pool locker rooms, pizza clatch)

Comments added 9/6/25: 5 green, 1 red

Post its:

- Divisive at every level
- DEI is Neo-Marxism or Marxism in disguise. The ideology pits perceived oppressors against alleged oppressed and seeks to impose guidelines and punishments.
- Local families have fallen victim to DEI's scrutinizing over certain people groups, looking over others. Low income division
- I don't have a problem with the definitions of DEI but I have a problem with how it is being implemented into our town and community. It is disenfranchising certain groups of people and elevating other groups of people. Example: pool, pizza clatch, trans fishing trip.

Chapter 9 Text Reference: Page showing Chapter 9 "Goals, Policies, & Programs" with circled sections including:

- Program 1: "Provide increased access to government documents in multiple languages and easily accessible assistance for those who may need additional support."
- Program 2: "Identify areas of City government where greater physical accessibility and accommodations are needed to increase access to all members of the public."

Margin note: "Translator services at Council mtgs."

- The DEI commission failed to implement interpreter accommodation services at Council mtgs. A marginalized speaker was not given adequate time to speak at a Council mtg
-

Keep/Modify DEI Chapter Of Comprehensive Plan

1. Promoting Inclusivity and Belonging: The DEI Commission's work helps create a welcoming and accepting community where all residents feel valued.

- "Let Ellensburg be a city where everyone knows that their presence and contributions and voices are welcome and appreciated, and that they are valued members of our community."
- "...strengthening a community involves making people feel seen, valued, welcome, and appreciated, and that entities like the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission help achieve this."

Comments added 8/20/25:

- 31 green, 1 red
- Post its:
 - This contractive process and language has left the LGBTQ community feeling unlifted and unsafe. Please add language around safety!
 - Ideally all residents don't just feel valued but are valued (*someone added a green dot to this to 2nd it*)
 - Please include the voices of the city's marginalized populations i.e. on committee of 6
 - Voices are equally welcome
 - Reminder that the work of the DEI commission is to create an equal playing field, not leverage anyone above anyone else (misconception)
 - It is the job of our government to act on behalf of the vulnerable who cannot defend themselves from bias and a rigged system.
 - Include safety, LGBTQ people heard repeatedly that they aren't real— don't exist. This makes it feel unsafe.

Comments added 9/6/25:

- 28 green, 2 red
- Post its:
 - What would it mean to actually value everyone? (NOTE: someone else wrote on same post it: I second this)
 - It's not just about making folks feel valued— it's trying to move towards actually valuing people
 - Add "the DEI Commission promotes inclusion and belonging → the City and Council should prioritize this too— but they don't always which is why the Commission matters"

- There needs to be representation of what is the role of City government. The role is to support care and represent our community. The DEI is charged with the most socially challenging part and should be empowered
- We all have different needs and strengths. DEI makes sure we are all treated equitable and have a chance to do what we need
- My wife was on Water Street heading south, stopped for a Latino woman crossing with young daughter, man in truck rolled down his window and yelled “Hey Spic, hurry up!” Karen called 911 and reported a racial slur and the Ellensburg cops did nothing. “Free speech” Lee Bates, Ellensburg
- Add “and included”
- So much misinformation on anti DEI side! DEI does not equal affirmative action
- This should not be limited to the Commission, the City needs to do this. (attached with four green dots)
- The City of Ellensburg should want all their residents to feel this way. NOT unique to the DEI Commission (shouldn’t be)
- What is outlined in this chapter of the Comprehensive Plan—including the DEI Commission
- And be involved in and creating, participating in local city meetings and activities
- Equity- does not mean \$\$\$. Too many quote socialism etc.
- How can we do this while making people on the “other side” ALSO feel included and valued?

2. Addressing Historical Inequities and Marginalization: DEI efforts are necessary to address a history of systemic unfairness. The commission's work is seen to correct these issues and ensure everyone is treated as an equal citizen.

- DEI is "meant to address these traditions of unfairness and try to include everyone as equal citizens,"
- Some groups "have been marginalized over the course of history, both at local and global levels."

Comments added 8/20/25:

- 27 green, 4 red
- Post its:
 - DEI is not about who gets to use what bathroom. It's about colluctating (*illegible*) and understanding and support. That’s why the commission

AND chapter 9 is so important to retain and strengthen and grow (*This one is attached with a red dot*)

- The commission's work is still needed to continue to work on these issues, so that we prevent history from repeating AND keep working to address ongoing inequities in our community.
- You can never correct these issues. Political, cultural and hate prevents it from happening. DB (*signature*)
- Although these issues can't be "corrected" people can and should be educated about historical inequities through community events. LM (*signature*)
- Historic systems of inequality are not merely in the past. Historic inequalities have created present inequalities that must continue to be addressed.
- Equity is also about understanding gaps and disparities by analyzing data and hearing people's experiences, in order to address barriers to participation and well being.
- Marginalized groups continue to experience unfairness due to (red lining, enslavement, high incarceration rates, generational trauma, lingering racism) so the disenfranchisement continues to exist and harm people.
- It is the job of our government to act on behalf of vulnerable residents who have experienced inequity and exclusion.
- Marginalized community members are not safe. They are afraid (*This one is attached with a red dot*)
- Statements made at the city council meeting include "there is no racism in Eburg and hasn't been for decades".
 - Responses to this include: I second this item. Another person said, there is definitely issues of racism speaking as a 1. White man of latino son in law/grand kids 2. Former substitute teacher here 3. Contracted teacher in Mattawa, Othello, Aberdeen but who lives here.

Comments added 9/6/25:

- 14 green, 14 red
 - Institutionalized discrimination has existed since the Constitution. We need to recognize it.
 - This is a real, tangible problem currently occurring in our community. BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ people have been assaulted at the high school. Removing DEI language will embolden those who want to commit violence against minorities.
 - This only succeeds if the whole community is changed within the work. The commission is important but they can't do the work alone.
 - No action in this, (#2) just a statement.

- A history that is still impacting people today. (another post it attached to this says: This is crucial)
- Constitution has not been effective in making people be included. I.e. Native Americans, Blacks, Chinese Americans, disabled, Hispanics
- Stats indicate generally up to 10% of any population is LGBTQ. They are also part of our town!
- Addressing historical inequities rarely (if ever) excludes anyone.
- “Groups” doesn’t identify the specificity of identity that have not just been marginalized but actively discriminated against.
- Unfairness does not equal inequity, nor does it capture the violence and harm that ensues
- If we’re going to be equals, we need to be equals. Discrimination (bigotry) is the same regardless of which direction it comes from.
- I hope that if Chapter 9 stays put, that the trainings on diversity are not heavy handed or overtly biased towards trans or other hot-button issues that will antagonize officials on the right.
- These points all fail to address the importance of a designated body for helping raise awareness and facilitate social conversations that help us better understand and care for all members of our community.
- NOTE on first bullet of poster about “equal citizens”: “Equal citizens” suggests the goal has something to do with immigration.
- “Historical” implies inequity is over. Equity and inclusion addresses historical and ongoing issues.
- Marginalization and misrepresentation.
- To address a history of and current systemic unfairness
- Acknowledge difference and needs of different people as well as gaps in understanding
- Adjust “the Commission’s work” to include “and the city of Ellensburg” is a shared commitment OR The commission is designed to uplift this work to ensure these issues are uplifted.
- ATTACHED WITH RED DOT: This isn’t just about the commission– it’s about informing City decisions, practices and policies.

3. Supporting the Community Through Programs and Funding: DEI Commission provides tangible support such as grant funding for various community groups and initiatives as specified in Chapter 9.

- A Licensed Mental Health Counselor noted they are "deeply concerned about the impact that this loss would have on the mental and emotional health of individuals as well as on our overall health as a community."

· Programs "like the Pizza Klatch space at the high school for LGBTQ+ students... are not just beneficial; they are essential. They create tangible spaces of safety and empowerment for the underrepresented."

Comments added 8/20/25:

- 30 green, 1 red
- Post its:
 - An equity-driven plan can help to ensure that services and programs across the board are benefiting all segments of the community, particularly those who have not been able to get their needs met.
 - Funding for DEI initiatives ensures that all residents including those in poverty can participate in city services.
 - The budget for the DEI commission helps low income individuals, often including children, to be able to have access to services that they may otherwise not have access to. This creates growth of many forms within our community.
 - I am a LMHC and agree wholeheartedly to this @the LMHC!!
 - It's not just mental health impact, it's a high/much increased risk of suicidality or shortened life due to feeling unsupported/unwanted and worsening socio-economic experience
 - These tangible supports include increasing access to community resources for all community members
 - The DEI budget is \$10,000. The city's budget is \$15 million- a fraction of 1%.

Comments added 9/6/25:

- 18 green, 2 red
- Post its:
 - Add something in main bullet about "provides tangible support to help all members feel welcome and uplift members of our community often excluded or marginalized". (POST IT ADDED TO THIS: Up vote this)
 - How can we do this without threatening people who feel demonized by the left, so they also feel included and not guilt- tripped?
 - I'm not a fan of "safe spaces" because they foster segregation rather than community and inclusion
 - The statement is missing nuance related to City decision making and applying an equity lens to their decisions
 - Not sure this relevant to Chapter 9 does not equal DEI Commission
 - School focus on sexuality creates distrust in public
 - I'm curious what grants might be available for anti-DEI folks– how they can be included instead of feeling that groups they don't support or understand are getting benefits they aren't.

- Should emphasize that this can impact EVERYONE’S mental health–DEI impacts community members in ways they don’t even realize

4. Benefitting the Entire Community: DEI work strengthens the community. This includes attracting visitors and students who feel welcome, which can positively impact the local economy and make Ellensburg a place where people want to live.

- "I benefit from living in a community where all people are treated fairly and protected from discrimination."
- The commission's work affects the local economy: "If the college fails due to students fearing attending schools here, our economy will tank."

Comments added 8/20/25:

- 31 green, 3 red
- Post its:
 - Attracting visitors and students who feel welcome and safe
 - Being a welcoming community invites people in– it is a strength, it isn’t only that driving students away is but for the economy.
 - It is the role of our government to represent especially those who are vulnerable and have been excluded and mistreated. This advocacy affects all other decisions.
 - Initiatives that worked to include/make communities accessible to marginalized folks/ramps, sideways, closed captioning, audio books, etc. etc.) benefit EVERYONE, we all thrive when we care for the most disenfranchised.
 - Strengthening the community through cultural exposure to other ideas, experiences, ways of doing things (*someone added a green dot to this with a checkmark and word “2nd”*)
 - Language very similar to “promoting inclusive and belonging”. What’s the difference? Economic argument? (*this one has two red dots attaching it to poster*)

Comments added 9/6/25:

- 25 green, 3 red
- Post its:
 - DEI is not only a mechanism to RETAIN Ellensburg economy, but a way in which to grow the economy as well by creating opportunity, and overall growth.

- “Contribute and positively impact the local economy” Add: “ I benefit from living in a community where all people feel safe to exist and thrive in our community.”
- I vote for schools but have no children attending them– same reason to support
- My wife and I attended the Rodeo Parade in 2013. A man next to us commented on a CWU cheerleader, she was a “little person”. He pointed and yelled “where did she come from? Look at her, she’s not one of us”. Lee R Bates, Ellensburg
- My view is not captured on the posters. DEI in Ellensburg is based on citizen’s responses and identified need. It is not an abstracted apparatus, got evolved on citizen’s recorded needs that are ongoing and that has borne out based on ongoing interviews.
- If we fail to message that we value and care for all members of our community, we will not attract new industries and people. We will stagnate and decrease our economic development.
- I was conversing with a fellow Rotarian at the Chamber of Commerce. A man heard me mention I’m from Kirkland–“Oh you Westsiders!” was his response. Lee R Bates.
- Students are part of our community as well, regardless of where they come from. We should make them feel welcome.
- NOTE: This post was added to the “Benefitting the Entire Community” statement around the “Which can positively impact the local economy and make Ellensburg...” it says: and raise families.
- Not just about attracting and recruiting people here. We have to retain them and make them want to stay.
- ATTACHED WITH A RED DOT: Allows all community members to participate in and access the community. Feel valued and seen because of this.

NEW POSTERS ADDED AT COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ON 9/6:

5. The City (as a government entity) should base their decisions and practices in the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion because they need to be responsive to all members of the community and historic discrimination/marginalization still impacts whose voices are heard.

25 green, 2 red

Post its:

- And who “matters’ and how is represented
 - Amen
 - RED DOT ADDED with this note: All decisions and practices? Some decisions and practices?
 - Yes! Responsive and responsible for
 - Evidence and research/data driven principles
 - Our government only works when all people are under the law equally. Not special application to certain people.
 - The city government must consider the impact of all decisions, policies and processes, and how increase, decrease, prevent or otherwise limit access for all members of the community. Chapter 9 provides guidance and the DEI commission provides a representative body this care for the community.
 - Representation matters, let’s protect and empower all our residents
6. Equity and inclusion should be in the Comp Plan as it, and the DEI Commission, are based on demonstrable and stated needs of residents, which has been reinforced by listening tours and ongoing local issues (eg bullying in the schools based on identity). It is locally specific and attends to system and structural issues.

6 green, 0 red -no post its

Common Ground Workshop Pre-Read October 4, Chapter 9 of the City of Ellensburg’s Comprehensive Plan

Thank you for your interest and/or attendance at our upcoming *Common Ground* workshop. This document serves as both an overview of the process which has led us here as well as the statements which were validated as part of the Community Conversations for the thoughts from both the “Remove Chapter 9” and “Keep Chapter 9” opinions. These will serve as a common foundation to guide our work in the October workshop.

Background

Washington State’s Growth Management Act allows cities to amend their comprehensive plan on an annual basis. The Ellensburg City Council has established a process for that yearly amendment review, Ellensburg City Code (ECC) 15.250.090. ECC 15.250.090(D)(2) allows for proposed comprehensive plan amendments to be submitted to the city for consideration by March 31 of each year. By this year’s submittal deadline of March 31, 2025, the City received 308 comprehensive plan amendment applications essentially requesting the removal of Chapter 9, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI).

As the submittal of these applications became public knowledge, community members also submitted comments voicing their interest in keeping the DEI Chapter of the comprehensive plan. Per ECC 15.250.090(D)(3), Council was to review all submitted proposals to consider if they should be docketed at the second Council meeting in July. In preparation for this July docketing meeting, City staff met with leadership, Braver Angels and facilitators to discuss possible options for how to move this community passion and involvement forward into a productive conversation resulting in community-driven solutions for how to address the proposed comprehensive plan amendments.

The facilitators developed a plan to conduct two community conversations, followed by this Common Ground workshop. All 308 comprehensive plan amendment applications submitted, and additional written comments submitted, were analyzed and separated into the main arguments for keeping/modifying the chapter, and main arguments for removing it. These arguments were presented at two community conversations, and the public was invited to confirm, correct, and suggest edits to these arguments. The work from those conversations was compiled into this pre-read for the Common Ground Workshop. The intention of the workshop is to find common ground that both sides can agree is important, at which point staff will use that information to develop a recommendation to either keep, remove, or modify the comprehensive plan in some way. This recommendation will be brought back to Council for further analysis and next steps.

Thoughts on Chapter 9

The following thoughts were verified and created during the meetings which led into this workshop. They are listed in no priority but simply serve as guideposts for thoughts each side has had regarding Chapter 9. For more background on each of these perspectives, see the full downloadable texts at <https://ci.ellensburg.wa.us/1284/2025-DEI-Comprehensive-Plan-Amendments>

Remove Chapter 9

- **Government Scope & Role Concerns:** City government should focus on essential services rather than social policy initiatives. The proper role of local government is to provide core municipal services.
- **Legal Authority Concerns:** DEI policies may create legal risks for the city and exceed proper municipal authority. Compliance with federal guidelines should be prioritized.
- **Budget & Spending Concerns:** Public funds should be directed toward essential city services rather than DEI programs and commission activities.
- **General Opposition to DEI:** DEI concepts and policies should be eliminated from city government entirely.
- **Remove DEI Language**
- **Constitutional Protections Already Exist:** Existing constitutional protections and federal laws already provide adequate safeguards without additional DEI policies. DEI chapters are not required elements of comprehensive plans and other cities operate successfully without them.
- **Deadline and Process Violations:** The city failed to follow its own established procedures and deadlines in handling comprehensive plan amendment applications, raising questions about fair and consistent administration.
- **Implementation Concerns:** How DEI is being implemented in Ellensburg. Disenfranchises certain people, elevates others (e.g. Pool locker rooms, pizza klatch)

Keep Chapter 9

- **Promoting Inclusivity and Belonging:** The DEI Commission's work helps create a welcoming and accepting community where all residents feel valued.
- **Addressing Historical Inequities and Marginalization:** DEI efforts are necessary to address a history of systemic unfairness. The commission's work is seen to correct these issues and ensure everyone is treated as an equal citizen.
- **Supporting the Community Through Programs and Funding:** DEI Commission provides tangible support such as grant funding for various community groups and initiatives as specified in Chapter 9.
- **Benefitting the Entire Community:** DEI work strengthens the community. This includes attracting visitors and students who feel welcome, which can positively impact the local economy and make Ellensburg a place where people want to live.
- **The City (as a government entity) should base their decisions and practices in the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion** because they need to be responsive to all members of the community and historic discrimination/marginalization still impacts whose voices are heard.
- **Equity and inclusion should be in the Comp Plan as it**, and the DEI Commission, are based on demonstrable and stated needs of residents, which has been reinforced by listening tours and ongoing local issues (e.g. bullying in the schools based on identity). It is locally specific and attends to system and structural issues.



Points of Agreement - Common Ground Workshop

Chapter 9- City of Ellensburg Comprehensive Plan

Held on 10/4 in Ellensburg, WA

Event # 4980

Values, Concerns and Solutions/Policies are not listed in any particular order

Values that had unanimous agreement

- Strengthening communities: through social engagement and respect
- We value accessibility as a community in terms of both language, financial, and physical (jobs, decent place to live, transportation, playgrounds, etc.)
- We value community that includes people of many backgrounds and lived experiences

Concerns that had unanimous agreement

- Chapter 9 values may cause misperception of our community, resulting in unintended exclusion
- Not feeling excluded
- There is a need for additional transparency about what the DEI Commission funds have been used for
- We do not want to feel like we are being forced to believe a certain thing

Solutions or Policies that had unanimous agreement

- Provide additional education that helps people better understand the City's Code



CHAPTER 9 DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS CHAPTER

- Background information and context related to local history, current events, and plans for the future, addressing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within the City of Ellensburg.
- Policies that seek to make City resources more accessible to all.
- Policies that direct the City's efforts towards encouraging welcoming and inclusive environments within the Community.
- Policies intended to support a culturally inclusive community, where all people experience a sense of belonging.

OVERVIEW

This chapter contains goals, policies, and programs that define how the City of Ellensburg can play a role in fostering an environment of understanding, equity, and belonging within the community. The following is the City of Ellensburg's initial action plan aimed at systematically addressing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in a way that can effect sustainable change to benefit all residents.

This document is a starting point for the City. There are likely many issues not yet articulated that can be addressed later as they are identified. This chapter is a living document; it is intended to be revisited and revised periodically. This is an initial framework, within which the City will continue to listen to residents, encourage collaboration and communication, and elevate marginalized voices.

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

The City of Ellensburg is committed to creating a community with a lived and built environment that improves lives, supports all people, and provides residents with opportunities to flourish. It is important for the Ellensburg community to be inclusive, to celebrate diversity, and to provide equitable opportunities to all. Doing so can help create a thriving local economy, and an environment in which individuals achieve their full potential.

Similar to many cities around the country, the national conversations that occurred in 2020 around race, social justice, and equity, sparked a discussion within our local community. These conversations highlighted the need to build a greater awareness of the impacts and challenges that marginalized communities are faced with on a daily basis. The goal of this chapter is to address ways in which the City can alleviate some of these systemic barriers, and foster a sense of belonging amongst all residents, by consistently listening to the ideas, experiences, and concerns of all who live here.

Through the lens of DEI

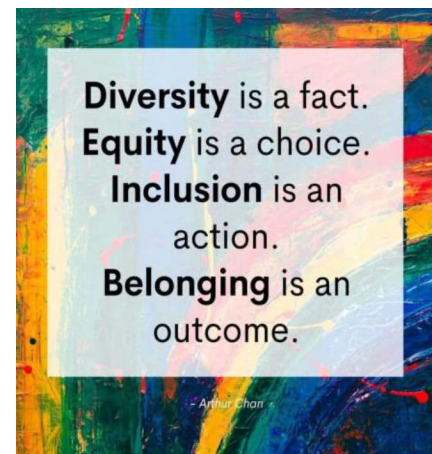
What does this all mean? Supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion related educational opportunities, social gathering opportunities, and supporting access to community resources, can create a sense of belonging within the community for all residents.

Diversity

Diversity is the presence of differences that may include, but are not limited to, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, socioeconomic status, language, (dis)ability, age, religious commitment, or political perspective. It is important for the City of Ellensburg to acknowledge and embrace the range of human differences present within our community. Doing so will help to build a strong foundation of understanding and a heightened awareness of the unintended impact of local policies. Embracing diversity means sharing space with others, sharing traditions, foods, and stories. The City can help support a strengthened sense of community and connection through outreach, regular events, and creating spaces accessible to all.

Equity

Equity alleviates barriers to ensure everyone has access to the same opportunities. Equity recognizes that advantages and barriers exist, and that as a result, we don't all start from the same place. Creating and supporting goals and policies that meet the community members where they are, will help to remove systemic barriers that make accessing basic community services challenging. Increasing accessibility to important resources and opportunities that best meet residents varying needs helps all residents succeed.



Inclusion

Inclusion is when all residents experience a sense of belonging and know they are both welcome in our community and encouraged to participate. Working on goals and policies that actively recruit participation and involvement from all residents within the community, fosters a sense of belonging and elevates traditionally marginalized voices. These methods can include listening tours, surveys, discussion groups, and use of a variety of media and print publications designed to be accessible to all residents.

Fostering a sense of belonging

In order to support all residents, the City will promote inclusion, listening, and diverse approaches to engagement through this lens of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Engaging and including marginalized groups replaces barriers with bridges and builds trust that strengthens the overall fabric of our community.



Recognizing the Past - Looking to the Future

An important step in building a forward-thinking vision within the community is to first learn about our local history, listen to residents' perceptions now, and consider how new goals and policies will positively affect the City of Ellensburg's plans for the future. The City cannot adequately support our community and elevate marginalized voices without first building a base of contextual knowledge, understanding, and trust.

Past

Historically, Ellensburg has been, and still is, a diverse community, with many stories and experiences that have yet to be discovered or shared. Acknowledging and learning local history within the community, the positive and the negative, can help increase awareness and empathy toward others and strengthen our community as a whole. Understanding local history can help create a more inclusive environment for all, where residents feel welcome and equally represented.

Kittitas Valley has always been, and continues to be, sacred to Native people. Traditionally, the Pshwanapum lived in the Kittitas Valley as a sub-band of the larger political and extended family networks of the Yakama tribes and bands. The Pshwanapum members were also referred to as the K'titas ("Kittitas") band, and they moved seasonally throughout the valley and nearby mountains to harvest roots, salmon, berries, game, and medicines. Several other tribal nations including Kiala, Tatxanixsha, Yumi'sh, and Che-lo-han, would hunt and trade in this area as well. Many descendants of these tribes continue to live throughout the 1855 Treaty

Territory of the Yakamas, practicing, honoring, and teaching the heritage and ancestry of the area. (*Information sourced from Daily Record News article from Aronica Family October 12, 2020, and Kittitas Valley Historical Museum*)

Histories and experiences of marginalized communities and people of color within Ellensburg continue to be uncovered from written and oral records, and there is still much more to be discovered. Historically, members including, but not limited to, Black, Chinese, Jewish, Hispanic, and Japanese communities have moved to Ellensburg as early as the mid-19th Century, for various reasons, such as migrant labor, work on the railroad, and work in local businesses. Sources such as Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps have shown that Ellensburg used to have a “China Town”, and “Chinese Laundries” appear to have existed throughout town (Sanborn Map 1888). An African Methodist Episcopal Church was established in 1908 at 404 South Main Street, and many black individuals played on local baseball teams as well. There is also evidence at times of divisive behavior and negative language towards people of color, as found in newspaper advertisements regarding restaurants and hotels that employed Chinese individuals.

Present

Currently, people of color, members of the LGBTQ¹, and disability communities, among many others, still report that they feel invisible, experience slurs and discriminatory comments, nonverbal glares, and behaviors that feel unwelcoming in Ellensburg. While members of some of marginalized communities have reported frequent, targeted incidents, they also believe that Ellensburg can be more inclusive, and that the welcoming nature of our community can rise to a deeper level of acceptance and affirmation, utilizing the talents, skills, and experiences of all who live here.

Ellensburg can be a welcoming community that comes together in times of need, where strangers reach out and neighbors help each other. However, fully supporting and accepting people of color, ethnic and religious minorities, and members of the LGBTQ, disability communities, over 65 communities, and others, can be improved. Similar to what many towns and cities around the country are currently experiencing and working on, the City of Ellensburg recognizes it needs to be more responsive and prepared when handling issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. This chapter lays the groundwork for this to happen, as the City continues towards a future of growth and expansion.

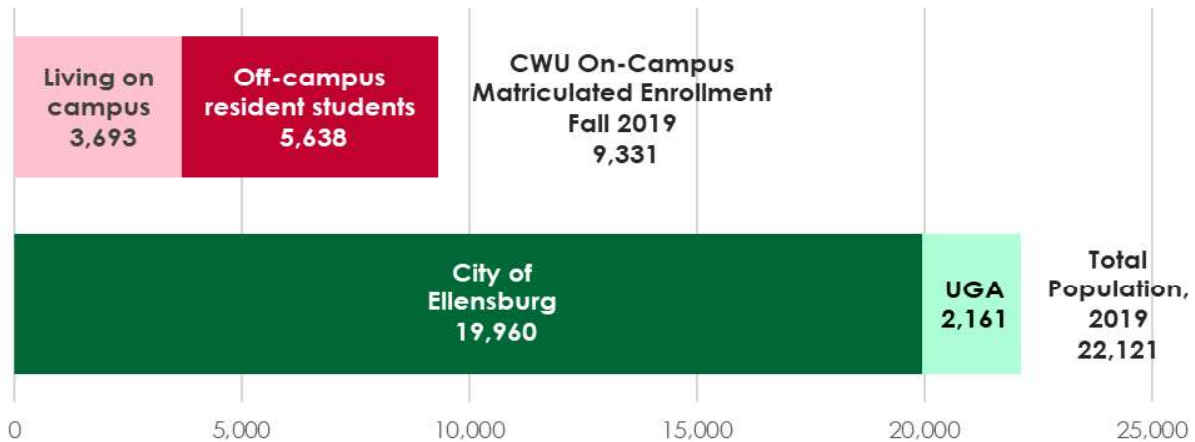
Future

Our dynamic community landscape has continued to develop, particularly in the last ten years, growing in size and in the diversity of residents. Statistics from the City of Ellensburg’s 2021 Housing Action Plan, show that in 2020, the estimated population of the City, with its urban growth area, (UGA) was 22,879 people, demonstrating a growth rate of roughly 1.9% annually

¹ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer and/or questioning

since 2015. Of the 22,879 people, roughly 9,331 constitute CWU enrollment, 3,693 of which were on-campus living, and 5,638 representing off campus resident students, as depicted in *Figure 26*.

Figure 26. CWU Student Population and Total Population, 2018



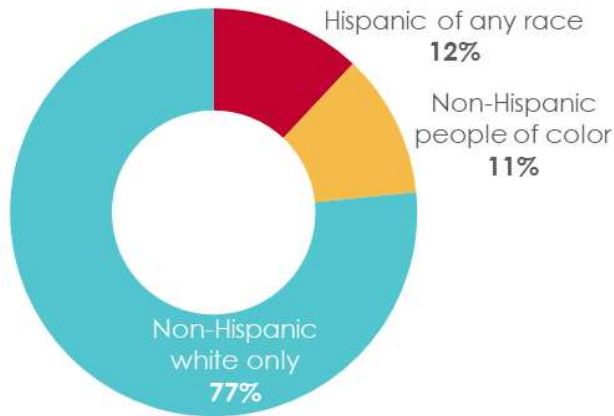
Students living on campus represents the housing occupancy for Fall 2019. Programmed capacity is 3,918 and the full built capacity is 4,249.

Sources: Central Washington University – Ellensburg Campus, Fall 2019; Washington OFM, 2021; BERK, 2021

As the City continues to support the needs of the diverse communities that live here, it is important to recognize that the statistics reflected in this chapter from the 2021 Housing Action Plan, do not reflect all of the diverse demographics of our community. Keeping that in mind, it is still valuable to look at current information that is available, as we work towards obtaining more detailed statistics in the future. By 2040 it is anticipated that 20% of the County population will be in the age bracket over age 65, and 19% in the age bracket of 45 to 64. At the same time, proportional decreases are expected for school-aged youth (5 to 19).

The Census also captures racial identity and Hispanic ethnic identity for respondents. As shown in *Figure 27* below, the Ellensburg community in 2018 was majority White and non-Hispanic (77%) but is growing more ethnically and racially diverse. From 2010 to 2018, Ellensburg’s Hispanic population increased from 7% to 12% overall, and non-Hispanic people of color increased from 8% to 11%. *Figure 28* provides a further breakdown of the Non-White Alone demographics.

Figure 27. Ellensburg Population by Race and Ethnicity, 2018



Sources: ACS 5-year B02001 estimates, 2018; BERK, 2021.

Figure 28. Ellensburg Population by Racial Identity for Non-White Alone Residents, 2018



Sources: ACS 5-year B02001 estimates, 2018; BERK, 2021.

The University’s emphasis on attracting students from minority and underserved communities, as well as diverse faculty and staff, continues to impact the demographics of Ellensburg. The changing nature of the labor force has also created greater diversity in the community. People from many countries have settled in Ellensburg over the years, and there is no reason to think that these influential factors are going to be less impactful in the future.

As Ellensburg continues to grow, there is the potential for marginalized groups to feel excluded unless the community has a plan for improving cultural relationships. The City of Ellensburg has developed this chapter in a sincere effort to create an equitable, just, and safe community - one where all residents know they belong and are welcome.

GOALS, POLICIES, & PROGRAMS

These DEI goals, policies, and programs contain steps that the City of Ellensburg will take to create an inclusive, welcoming, equitable, and safe community.

Goal DEI-1: Increase accessibility to City Services, Projects, Programs, and Events.

Policy A Support policies and programs that increase accessibility to City services for all, utilizing the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Program 1 Provide increased access to government documents in multiple languages and easily accessible assistance for those who may need additional support.

Program 2 Identify areas of City government where greater physical accessibility and accommodations are needed to increase access to all members of the public.

Policy B Promote and encourage community engagement and outreach to all.

Program 1 Actively encourage participation from the public for community projects, events, and recreational activities, through a wide variety of media and information distribution methods.

Program 2 Provide City staff and elected officials with tools and regular training to understand and lead actions that are inclusive and equitable.

Program 3 Establish an ongoing review process of the costs for City-sponsored recreation and leisure activities to ensure that all members of the public have access to these services.

Program 4 Support civic education programs that actively engage diverse groups of the community, and encourage diverse representation among local leadership, organizations, and agencies.

Goal DEI-2: Foster Racial Understanding, Equity, and Belonging within the Community.

Policy A Encourage cultural sharing.

Program 1 Regularly support events and celebrations that highlight the variety of cultural traditions within the community.

Program 2 Encourage the creation of spaces where cultural foods and traditions can be shared among members of the community, as well as the creation of public spaces that are accommodating and accessible to all.

Program 3 Encourage increased communication and collaboration between the City government, Central Washington University, businesses, and education and social service sectors, through shared events, projects, and outreach, to help residents feel more comfortable visiting campus, and non-resident students feel more comfortable within the community.

Policy B Encourage local leadership to address systemic issues that create barriers for participation.

Program 1 Encourage City leadership to demonstrate support of marginalized groups through a variety of proclamations, and publicly speak to local actions that affect the diverse members of the community.

Program 2 Support the development of a framework to identify and address systemic inequalities within our local institutions.

Program 3 Collaborate with local organizations to help local businesses support diverse members of the community.

Goal DEI-3: Increase accessibility to local services and community resources for all residents.

Policy A Ensure that high quality service programs are available, accessible, and utilized by all, to support resident's basic needs.

Program 1 Partner with local health and social services to identify strategies for making their services accessible by all means of transportation.

Program 2 Advocate for low income, residential care facilities, and other housing for aging persons to be located close to services and amenities.

Program 3 Encourage and support programs that seek to provide residents with access to diverse health care providers who can respond to varying cultural and medical needs.

Policy B Encourage healthy activity and lifestyle by making recreational resources and opportunities accessible and welcoming to all residents.

Program 1 Provide opportunities for healthy activity in safe and accessible public spaces for all residents.

Program 2 Encourage communication between local businesses, organizations, and schools, to coordinate food pantries and local food distribution.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Work with DEI Commission to begin regular review of current City policies and procedures using the lens of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
2. Begin work towards regular Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training for City staff and elected officials.
3. Increase use of community engagement and social media tools to help with local outreach.
4. Review fees and costs for city sponsored recreational and leisure activities.
5. Develop a framework of accountability.
6. Develop a work plan for the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission.

POLICY CONNECTIONS

The **Housing** chapter includes policies and land use designations that support the development of many types of housing to ensure that people who live and work in Ellensburg have adequate housing choices.

The **Transportation** chapter includes policies related to providing a variety of transportation networks that is available for all community members.

The **Capital Facilities and Utilities** chapter includes policies that focus on providing public facilities and utilities that are accessible and affordable to all community members, including access to the library, reasonably priced utilities, and access to data and technology. This chapter also provides goals centered around providing excellent public safety services.

The **Parks and Recreation** chapter includes policies that focus on providing citywide programs and services that meet all community and group needs, in addition to preserving historical areas and features, while also developing high quality, diversified cultural arts facilities and programs that increase community awareness, attendance, and participation opportunities.

The **Economic Development** chapter includes policies related to growing and sustaining local businesses, while creating opportunities for new businesses that can provide goods and services that meet the needs of the local and regional community.

15.250.090 - Comprehensive plan amendments—Type V review process.

- A. *Purpose.* A comprehensive plan amendment or review is a mechanism by which the city may modify the text or map of the comprehensive plan in accordance with the provisions of the Growth Management Act, in order to respond to changing circumstances or needs of the city, and to review the comprehensive plan on a regular basis.
- B. *Initiation of text and map amendments.*
1. The city's comprehensive plan shall be subject to continuing evaluation and review by the city. Any amendment or revision to the comprehensive plan shall conform to chapter 36.70 RCW.
 2. Comprehensive plan amendments may be initiated by citizens, by the planning commission or other boards and commissions of the city, city staff, city council, or any other interested persons including applicants, hearing examiners and staff of other agencies. The proposed amendments or revisions to the comprehensive plan shall be docketed and considered by the city no more frequently than once every year except that amendments may be considered more frequently under the following circumstances:
 - a. The initial adoption of a subarea plan. Subarea plans adopted under this section must clarify, supplement, or implement jurisdiction-wide comprehensive plan policies, and may only be adopted if the cumulative impacts of the proposed plan are addressed by appropriate environmental review under chapter 43.21C RCW;
 - b. The development of an initial subarea plan for economic development located outside of the 100-year floodplain in a county that has completed a state-funded pilot project that is based on watershed characterization and local habitat assessment;
 - c. The adoption or amendment of a shoreline master program under the procedures set forth in chapter 90.58 RCW;
 - d. The amendment of the capital facilities element of a comprehensive plan that occurs concurrently with the adoption or amendment of a county or city budget; or
 - e. The adoption of comprehensive plan amendments necessary to enact a planned action under RCW 43.21C.440; provided, that amendments are considered in accordance with the public participation program established by the county or city under RCW 36.70A.130(2)(a) and all persons who have requested notice of a comprehensive plan update are given notice of the amendments and an opportunity to comment.
 3. All docketed amendment proposals shall be considered by the city concurrently so the cumulative effect of the various proposals can be ascertained. However, the city may adopt amendments or revisions to its comprehensive plan that conform with chapter 36.70 RCW after appropriate public participation whenever an emergency exists or to resolve an appeal of a comprehensive plan filed with the growth management hearings board or with a court.

- C. *Periodic review of comprehensive plan and development regulations.* The Growth Management Act requires the city to periodically conduct a thorough review of its comprehensive plan and regulations to bring them up to date with any relevant changes in the Growth Management Act and to respond to changes in land use and population growth. Consistent with the schedule in RCW 36.70A.130, the city shall periodically review and, if necessary, revise and adopt its comprehensive plan and development regulations every eight years.
- D. *Procedures.* Comprehensive plan amendments are subject to the Type V review process with the following variations:
1. A complete application for a comprehensive plan amendment shall be made on the comprehensive plan amendment form provided by the Ellensburg community development department. Additional supporting materials, such as photographs, statistics, etc., shall be included with the application;
 2. The city will accept applications for comprehensive plan amendments from April 1 to March 31 of the following year. The start of that acceptance period shall be advertised in accordance with the city's noticing requirements;
 3. In the city council's second regular meeting in July, the city council shall review the proposed amendments timely submitted for consideration to be docketed for review that year. Each proposed amendment shall be accompanied by the amendment application materials and a staff discussion of the proposed amendment with a recommendation on whether or not the proposed amendment is an appropriate amendment subject and is ready for consideration to be docketed for review that year;
 4. The proposed amendments chosen to be docketed by city council shall then be transmitted to the SEPA responsible official for SEPA review, and a 60-day notice of intent to adopt comprehensive plan or development regulation amendments shall be sent to the Washington State Department of Commerce. The city council may also request other city boards or agencies or other governmental entities to provide comments and recommendations on proposed comprehensive plan amendments. The comments and recommendations must be submitted to the city by the date of the planning commission's hearing unless the city grants an extension of time. Letters of support or objection to a proposed comprehensive plan amendment may be filed by any interested party. The letters must be filed by the date of the city council public hearing unless an extension of time is granted;
 5. The SEPA responsible official shall issue a notice of the SEPA threshold decision on the docketed amendments;
 6. The planning commission shall schedule and hold a public hearing on the docketed amendments and shall then make a recommendation to city council. The planning commission shall make one of four decisions in considering comprehensive plan text and

map amendments:

- a. Approval in the form submitted for public hearing;
 - b. Approval with changes;
 - c. Approval in part; or
 - d. Disapproval.
7. A public hearing to consider the docketed amendments shall be scheduled for city council following the planning commission hearing. Any appeal of the SEPA threshold determination shall also be heard at that public hearing;
8. The city council, after a recommendation from staff and the planning commission, and after holding a public hearing, shall make one of the following decisions:
- a. Approval in accordance with the findings and recommendations submitted by the planning commission;
 - b. Approval with modifications;
 - c. Refer all or part of the plan text or map amendment proposal back to the planning commission;
 - d. Refer all or part of the plan text or map amendment proposal to the following year's annual amendment process; or
 - e. Disapprove.

If the city council's decision is to refer the amendment request back to the planning commission, the council must specify which matters it wishes reconsidered by the planning commission. The final form and content of the comprehensive plan is determined by the city council; and

9. The annual docket cycle shall be completed by December 31 of the docket year. The comprehensive plan together with any and all amendments shall be provided to the city clerk to be placed in a permanent file and made available for public inspection. The city shall also transmit a complete and accurate copy of its comprehensive plan amendments to the Washington State Department of Commerce within ten days of adoption in accordance with state law.

(Ord. No. 4929, § 10, 11-6-2023; Ord. 4807 § 29, 2018; Ord. 4656 § 1 (Exh. O2), 2013)



Meeting Date: October 20, 2025
City of Ellensburg
City Council Agenda Report

Agenda Subject: 2025 Comprehensive Plan Amendment 25-02 Update and Next Steps (Public Comment Opportunity)
Submitted by: Stacey Henderson, Planning Manager
Department: Community Development

Suggested Motion/Action:

Move to approve a preferred option for Amendment 25-02.001-308.

Note: Staff requests guidance regarding 25-02.001-308, considering the possible outcomes as presented. The six possible actions as listed below, take into consideration a range of options moving forward, provide staff analysis, and address potential timeline and next steps considerations.

Background/Summary:

On July 21, 2025, staff presented the annual comprehensive plan amendment requests for possible docketing and adoption in 2025. Ellensburg City Code (ECC) 15.250.090 designates the Comprehensive (Comp) Plan annual update process, and item (D)(8 and 9) of that section requires docketed items to be adopted by City Council by December 31 of the same year the proposal was submitted. If this deadline is not met, Council may choose to move this item to the subsequent year to continue review.

At the July 2025 docketing meeting, staff proposed that Council docket item 25-02.001-.309, to further gather information and community input from both sides of the polarized discussion regarding keeping or removing Chapter 9 DEI. At the July meeting, one of the 309 applications was separated from 25-02 and proposed as its own amendment, due to the proposal not directly relating to removing Chapter 9. This separate application was ultimately not docketed by Council, and the revised amendment number that was docketed became 25-02.001-.308. Staff recommended moving forward with the revised 25-02.001-.308 in conjunction with the proposed Community Conversations and Common Ground Workshop, with suggested paths forward to be brought back to Council for consideration.

The first Community Conversation was held on August 20, 2025, from 6:00-8:00 p.m., and the second was held Saturday September 6, 2025, from 1:30-3:30 p.m., both at the Hal Holmes Community Center. All members of the public were welcome to attend, with opportunities to provide specific feedback toward issues/concerns to prepare for the Common Ground discussion—which was specifically designed to find areas of agreement between opposing sides of a polarizing issue. Participants of the community conversation validated concerns and arguments for each side of the issue, which framed the materials (pre-read) for the Common

Ground Workshop and also nominated individuals that represented their perspective to participate in the Workshop.

The Common Ground Workshop was held on October 4, from 10:00 am to 3:30 pm, at the Hal Holmes Community Center. Twelve participants, six for keeping the chapter and six for removing, participated in a six-hour long workshop as designed and facilitated by the Braver Angels organization. Staff was provided the official output (common ground) agreement that resulted from the workshop. This agreement (Exhibit 2) included agreed-upon values, concerns, and policies relating to the possible removal, amendment, or retainment of Chapter 9 DEI. No item was listed on this agreement unless every single participant at the table agreed with every word.

Previous Council Action:

At the July 21, 2025 Council meeting, the motion was approved 5-2 to docket item 25-02.001-.308 as proposed. The motion gave staff direction to move forward with conducting the two community conversations and common ground workshop, and to bring additional information and possible next steps back to Council.

Analysis:

The Community Conversations

The community conversations largely revolved around giving the public opportunity to validate, add to, and confirm the arguments, both for and against, keeping Chapter 9. Initial points were created from themes noted throughout the 308 applications and additional correspondence and comments received by the City. These reasons were then combined into a pre-read document which documented the process and shared rationale that all workshop participants were required to read before attending the Common Ground Workshop. Materials are also available on the City website. Below is an overview of the main points of each argument, reasons for removing chapter 9, and reasons against removing chapter 9, along with additional analysis and observations from City staff. The original pre-read document is attached to this staff report as Exhibit 1.

Reasons for Removing Chapter 9

Pre-Read Argument: Constitutional Protections Already Exist — Existing constitutional protections and federal laws already provide adequate safeguards without additional DEI policies. DEI Chapters are not required elements of comprehensive plans and other cities operate successfully without them.

Additional Staff Analysis: In the applications and at the workshop, many noted that protections already exist within local, state, and federal government that provide support to the groups Chapter 9 aims to support.

Pre-Read Argument: Implementation Concerns — How DEI is being implemented in Ellensburg, disenfranchises certain people, elevates others (e.g. Pool locker rooms, pizza klatch)

Additional Staff Analysis: An agreeable topic at the workshop included exploring the potential of making DEI goals more concrete with measurable progress. Many for

removing the chapter mentioned that these DEI goals are not concrete enough to measure progress or community impact. Participants for keeping the chapter agreed that this idea could be explored further. There is a need for broader understanding of state policies around public restrooms/locker rooms.

Pre-Read Argument: General Opposition to DEI - DEI Concepts and policies should be eliminated from city government entirely.

Additional Staff Analysis: This pre-read argument does not provide specific guidance as to why the chapter should be removed, but rather, requests removal of policies.

Pre-Read Argument: Government Scope and Role Concerns — City government should focus on essential services rather than social policy initiatives. The proper role of local government is to provide core municipal services.

Additional Staff Analysis: Those who participated in support of removing the chapter, explained that the concept, goals, and policies related to DEI are important, but do not belong in the Comprehensive Plan. Many argued that this is a government document largely intended to direct land use policy, which does not fit with DEI concepts. Cities are allowed to adopt optional chapters (or elements) in their comprehensive plans. Find more on the [MRSC Website](#).

Pre-Read Argument: Legal Authority Concerns — DEI policies may create legal risks for the city and exceed proper municipal authority. Compliance with federal guidelines should be prioritized.

Additional Staff Analysis: In the applications and at the workshop, many for removing the chapter shared concern that keeping a DEI chapter will put the City at risk to lose federal funding, or risk of lawsuit, due to recent Federal Policies.

July 21 Council Docketing Agenda Cited: Staff reviewed terms of the DOT Secretary and other executive orders, in conjunction with reviewing City Contracts, policies, and procedures, and believe that the City is currently in legal compliance with the terms of existing federal grants. As new federal grant requirements are issued, the City will review the terms of any new requirements to ensure compliance with those as well. This is a rapidly changing area of law nationally and the City will continue to monitor new case law and guidance.

Pre-Read Argument: Deadline and Process Violations — The City failed to follow its own established procedures and deadlines in handling comprehensive plan amendment applications, raising questions about fair and consistent administration.

Additional Staff Analysis: The concerns regarding accepting and seeking additional feedback beyond what was submitted by the March 31 deadline, is not a reason to remove the Chapter. Concern was shared at both community conversation events that this additional community outreach does not fairly address the applications that were submitted before the official deadline, and additional information should not be on the table. It is a requirement of the Comprehensive Plan to include public input to amend. Thus, it is the responsibility of the City to request more information on any amendments submitted, if compatible with the established review process per the code. Those who are for keeping the chapter did not need to submit an application to keep an existing

chapter before the March 31 deadline, because applications are intended for proposed changes, not to propose to keep things as they already exist. As the City received additional feedback in response to these original applications, it was clear more public outreach was necessary.

Pre-Read Argument: Remove DEI Language

Additional Staff Analysis: This item does not clarify why the chapter should be removed or which language specifically should be removed.

Pre-Read Argument: Budget and Spending Concerns — Public funds should be directed toward essential City services rather than DEI programs and commission activities.

Additional Staff Analysis: The Comp Plan policies do not dictate specific spending or commission activities, and therefore, the matter at hand is not directly related to budget or spending concerns.

Reasons for Keeping Chapter 9

Pre-Read Argument: Promoting Inclusivity and Belonging- The DEI Commission’s work helps create a welcoming and accepting community where all residents feel valued.

Additional Staff Analysis: It was mentioned in comments and at the workshop from both sides, that many felt that having this chapter helps a diverse population feel welcome in the community, and helps all residents feel valued. There is a need to distinguish between Chapter 9 DEI of the Comprehensive Plan and the work of the DEI Commission, which is established by City Code.

Pre-Read Argument: Addressing Historical Inequities and Marginalization- DEI efforts are necessary to address a history of systemic unfairness. The commission’s work is seen to correct these issues and ensure everyone is treated as an equal citizen.

Additional Staff Analysis: Many cited concerns of systemic unfairness, and many agreed that ways to help prevent systemic unfairness is for the City to support DEI language and policies.

Pre-Read Argument: Benefitting the Entire Community- DEI work strengthens the community. This includes attracting visitors and students who feel welcome, which can positively impact the local economy and make Ellensburg a place where people want to live.

Additional Staff Analysis: Many at the workshop noted that supporting DEI work within the framework of an important document such as the Comprehensive Plan, can help strengthen the community, and demonstrate that the City is welcoming.

Pre-Read Argument: Equity and Inclusion should be in the Comp Plan- It is based on demonstratable and stated needs of residents, which has been reinforced by listening tours and ongoing local issues (e.g. bullying in the schools based on identity). It is locally specific and attends to system and structural issues.

Additional Staff Analysis: There was some agreement at the workshop to make these goals and policies more measurable and/or dispersing them throughout the relevant chapters/elements. As a 20-year guiding vision, the Comp Plan generally has broadly

defined goals and policies. An alternative could be to develop a goal to measure impact and outcomes of policies.

Pre-Read Argument: Supporting the Community through programs and Funding- DEI Commission provides tangible support such as grant funding for various community groups and initiatives as specified in Chapter 9.

Additional Staff Analysis: The Comp Plan document does not directly dictate specific spending or commission activities, and therefore, the removal or retention of Chapter 9 is not affected by this reason.

The Common Ground

Staff has conducted an initial analysis regarding the feedback, observations, and agreements from this process and the Common Ground Workshop and has provided correlating possible actions to take. In addition to the bullet points from the workshop agreement document, there were several main recurring themes and discussion points that have been included in the table as “Observations and Themes”. Per the workshop process, items did not stay on the workshop agreement document unless every participant agreed to every single word. There were several points of discussion, important to both sides, that with more work and more time, were very close to being agreeable points. Those are worth including in the initial analysis, as they provide additional information, intentions, and needs from these groups.

Agreement Items

Possible Actions as Discussed

<u>Values</u>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Value strengthening community through social engagement and respect. 2. Value accessibility as a community in terms of language, financial, and physical (jobs, decent place to live, transportation, playgrounds, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create goals for the City and commissions to focus on planning inclusive events intended to bring people together. • Create programs to encourage development of third spaces and gathering spaces that support social engagement. • Enhance programs to enhance physical, language, and financial accessibility to City resources and events, by auditing existing City sites, resources, and procedures. • Focus throughout comp plan on goals and policies that help remove accessibility barriers for all. • Ensure comp plan chapters address inclusion in language and intent

<p>3. Value community that includes people of many backgrounds and lived experiences.</p> <p><u>Staff Observations/ Themes</u></p> <p>4. <i>Value Safety</i></p> <p><i>Safety is defined and imagined differently by both sides of the conversation, but both held basic underlying values wanting their families, friends, and community members to feel safe.</i></p> <p><i>Note: This pattern of shared values with different emphases—emerged repeatedly throughout the dialogue. When people feel heard on what they value most deeply, they become more able to hear others' perspectives and consider solutions that honor multiple priorities simultaneously.</i></p>	<p><u>Possible Actions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Enhance language throughout plan to ensure policies, goals, and programs support safety in spaces, and for all. Include language in a new mission statement that supports respect and clarifies zero tolerance for unsafe environments whether social or physical barriers.</i>
<p><u>Concerns</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chapter 9 values may cause misperception of our community, resulting in unintended exclusion 2. Not feeling excluded 3. We do not want to feel like we are being forced to believe a certain thing <p>-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broaden language throughout plan to ensure nobody is excluded and provide inclusive language. • See above. • Possible solutions discussed (but not fully agreed upon yet) included turning the context and background statement into a mission statement, emphasizing that Ellensburg is inclusive and welcoming community to all, speaking to the City's spirit and overall intention rather than specific DEI terminology and goals. <p><u>Possible Actions</u></p>

The Community Conversations and Common Ground Workshop process demonstrated that people across different viewpoints share core concerns (safety, inclusion, community strength, fairness) but prioritize and define these values differently. This process didn't eliminate disagreement, but it transformed how participants understood each other's positions and revealed some actionable ground.

Limitations and Additional Considerations:

The Common Ground workshop had a number of process-related challenges that may have influenced participation, overall quality of the discussion, and outcomes. The time available for the discussion during the Common Ground Workshop limited the depth of discussion. Facilitators' styles varied. And participants had differing levels of understanding about the content and intent of Chapter 9, the distinction between the DEI Commission, and the Comprehensive Plan itself. Future conversations could include information and education on relevant topics to help everyone begin with the same information and resources.

Other Insights From Facilitators

- Polarization often thrives on distance and assumption, but direct dialogue reveals the common values can actually work. The process demonstrated that people with opposing views on Chapter 9 share core concerns—about safety, inclusion, community strength, and fairness—but prioritize and define these values differently. When people engage in structured conversation (not so much letter writing and council testimony) they can discover shared values can coexist with disagreement on approaches.
- Direct conversation reveals nuance that written comments cannot. Participants discovered their opponents were more reasonable than presumed, and positions they thought were monolithic proved complex.
- Shared values emerged despite disagreement on methods. Broad consensus existed on values (strengthening community, accessibility, welcoming diverse people) even where views differed on whether Chapter 9 was the right approach.
- Both sides want measurable outcomes. The shared interest in moving from abstract aspirations to concrete, trackable goals could inform any future chapter structure.

Possible Actions

After considering, reading, and listening to all comments from both sides of this discussion, and observing how structured dialogue revealed shared values and unexpected common ground, there are several possible paths forward, in addition to simply keeping or removing Chapter 9. Below is a list of six possible outcomes regarding how to address the future of Chapter 9 DEI. Provided with each outcome are important timeline dates and next steps. One aspect to consider is whether these outcomes can be completed in 2025, or will need to be continued into the 2026 periodic update process.

Tentative Adoption Timeline (Pending City Council Selection):

- 60 Day Commerce Review- To complete within 5 days after adoption
- SEPA Review- Appeal period must end before final adoption effective date.

- November 13, 2025 Planning Commission Hearing
- December 1, 2025 Council Hearing
- December 15, 2025 Council Second Reading
- December 31, 2025- Required deadline for adoption per ECC 15.250.090(D)(8 and 9)

1. Remove Chapter 9

As requested from the applications, one possible outcome is to move to remove Chapter 9 without replacement material. This item did not appear to be agreeable at the workshop for those participants who are for keeping the Chapter.

Next Steps: No new text is required to prepare to complete this option, so adoption in 2025 may or may not be possible considering the tight timeline.

2. Remove Chapter 9 DEI and Distribute Goals to Other Sections

Another possible option is to remove the chapter and distribute its goals to related other sections. Although keeping the goals in the plan is agreeable to both parties, this option still removes the presence of the City addressing the ways in which the community supports all and is inclusive.

Next Steps: Minimal analysis is required for this option, adoption in 2025 may or may not be possible considering the tight timeline.

3. Replace Chapter 9 DEI with Chapter 9 Equity & Community Engagement (or Equity, Accessibility, and Engagement)

This possible option removes the existing DEI Chapter as requested, and utilizes the analysis and information learned in the community conversations and common ground workshop develop a chapter that addresses the shared concerns, values, and ideas that resulted from the workshop. A draft is attached to this report as Exhibit 3.

Next Steps: Option includes preparing new chapter content, likely pushing completion to the 2026 periodic update process to ensure adequate time for chapter development.

4. Remove Chapter 9 DEI in 2025, and add an introductory chapter with community vision and values into the comp plan as developed in 2026 during the periodic update.

Some at the workshop favored replacing the chapter with a mission statement addressing equity in the community, and distributing measurable concrete goals to applicable chapters. An example of an introductory chapter from the City of Burien is attached as Exhibit 4.

Next Steps: Option includes preparing new text, goals, and policies, likely pushing completion to the 2026 periodic update process to ensure adequate time for chapter development.

5. Remove Chapter 9 DEI and replace with formal guiding policy document that is more adaptable such as a resolution, ordinance, or strategic plan (addressing inclusion, cultural competence, belonging, accessibility, and engagement, etc.)

One option is to create a separate guiding document addressing these values, while removing DEI from the comprehensive plan.

Next Steps: No new text is required to prepare to complete this option, so adoption in 2025 may or may not be possible considering the tight timeline.

6. Leave Chapter 9 DEI without modification

Similar to removing the chapter, this item also did not appear to be on the table at the workshop for those for removing Chapter 9 DEI.

Next Steps: No new text is required to prepare to complete this option, so adoption in 2025 may or may not be possible considering the tight timeline.

Staff also recommend that Council consider the broader value of this engagement process as a model for addressing other polarizing community issues, as the dialogue itself proved to be a community-building tool regardless of the ultimate decision on Chapter 9.

Financial Impact:

The costs of administering the annual Comprehensive Plan amendment process are included in the 2025 Community Development budget. Additional staff and professional service expenditures can be accommodated by the current budget authority.

Budget Adjustment: No

Attachments:

1. Exhibit 1_Common Ground Workshop Pre Read
2. Exhibit 2_Final Points of Agreement from Workshop
3. Exhibit 3_Equity Accessibility and Community Engagement DRAFT
4. Exhibit 4_City of Burien Example

Exhibit 1

Common Ground Workshop Pre-Read October 4, Chapter 9 of the City of Ellensburg’s Comprehensive Plan

Thank you for your interest and/or attendance at our upcoming *Common Ground* workshop. This document serves as both an overview of the process which has led us here as well as the statements which were validated as part of the Community Conversations for the thoughts from both the “Remove Chapter 9” and “Keep Chapter 9” opinions. These will serve as a common foundation to guide our work in the October workshop.

Background

Washington State’s Growth Management Act allows cities to amend their comprehensive plan on an annual basis. The Ellensburg City Council has established a process for that yearly amendment review, Ellensburg City Code (ECC) 15.250.090. ECC 15.250.090(D)(2) allows for proposed comprehensive plan amendments to be submitted to the city for consideration by March 31 of each year. By this year’s submittal deadline of March 31, 2025, the City received 308 comprehensive plan amendment applications essentially requesting the removal of Chapter 9, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI).

As the submittal of these applications became public knowledge, community members also submitted comments voicing their interest in keeping the DEI Chapter of the comprehensive plan. Per ECC 15.250.090(D)(3), Council was to review all submitted proposals to consider if they should be docketed at the second Council meeting in July. In preparation for this July docketing meeting, City staff met with leadership, Braver Angels and facilitators to discuss possible options for how to move this community passion and involvement forward into a productive conversation resulting in community-driven solutions for how to address the proposed comprehensive plan amendments.

The facilitators developed a plan to conduct two community conversations, followed by this Common Ground workshop. All 308 comprehensive plan amendment applications submitted, and additional written comments submitted, were analyzed and separated into the main arguments for keeping/modifying the chapter, and main arguments for removing it. These arguments were presented at two community conversations, and the public was invited to confirm, correct, and suggest edits to these arguments. The work from those conversations was compiled into this pre-read for the Common Ground Workshop. The intention of the workshop is to find common ground that both sides can agree is important, at which point staff will use that information to develop a recommendation to either keep, remove, or modify the comprehensive plan in some way. This recommendation will be brought back to Council for further analysis and next steps.

Thoughts on Chapter 9

The following thoughts were verified and created during the meetings which led into this workshop. They are listed in no priority but simply serve as guideposts for thoughts each side has had regarding Chapter 9. For more background on each of these perspectives, see the full downloadable texts at <https://ci.ellensburg.wa.us/1284/2025-DEI-Comprehensive-Plan-Amendments>

Remove Chapter 9

- **Government Scope & Role Concerns:** City government should focus on essential services rather than social policy initiatives. The proper role of local government is to provide core municipal services.
- **Legal Authority Concerns:** DEI policies may create legal risks for the city and exceed proper municipal authority. Compliance with federal guidelines should be prioritized.
- **Budget & Spending Concerns:** Public funds should be directed toward essential city services rather than DEI programs and commission activities.
- **General Opposition to DEI:** DEI concepts and policies should be eliminated from city government entirely.
- **Remove DEI Language**
- **Constitutional Protections Already Exist:** Existing constitutional protections and federal laws already provide adequate safeguards without additional DEI policies. DEI chapters are not required elements of comprehensive plans and other cities operate successfully without them.
- **Deadline and Process Violations:** The city failed to follow its own established procedures and deadlines in handling comprehensive plan amendment applications, raising questions about fair and consistent administration.
- **Implementation Concerns:** How DEI is being implemented in Ellensburg. Disenfranchises certain people, elevates others (e.g. Pool locker rooms, pizza klatch)

Keep Chapter 9

- **Promoting Inclusivity and Belonging:** The DEI Commission's work helps create a welcoming and accepting community where all residents feel valued.
- **Addressing Historical Inequities and Marginalization:** DEI efforts are necessary to address a history of systemic unfairness. The commission's work is seen to correct these issues and ensure everyone is treated as an equal citizen.
- **Supporting the Community Through Programs and Funding:** DEI Commission provides tangible support such as grant funding for various community groups and initiatives as specified in Chapter 9.
- **Benefitting the Entire Community:** DEI work strengthens the community. This includes attracting visitors and students who feel welcome, which can positively impact the local economy and make Ellensburg a place where people want to live.
- **The City (as a government entity) should base their decisions and practices in the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion** because they need to be responsive to all members of the community and historic discrimination/marginalization still impacts whose voices are heard.
- **Equity and inclusion should be in the Comp Plan as it**, and the DEI Commission, are based on demonstrable and stated needs of residents, which has been reinforced by listening tours and ongoing local issues (e.g. bullying in the schools based on identity). It is locally specific and attends to system and structural issues.

Exhibit 2



Points of Agreement - Common Ground Workshop

Chapter 9- City of Ellensburg Comprehensive Plan

Held on 10/4 in Ellensburg, WA

Event # 4980

Values, Concerns and Solutions/Policies are not listed in any particular order

Values that had unanimous agreement

- Strengthening communities: through social engagement and respect
- We value accessibility as a community in terms of both language, financial, and physical (jobs, decent place to live, transportation, playgrounds, etc.)
- We value community that includes people of many backgrounds and lived experiences

Concerns that had unanimous agreement

- Chapter 9 values may cause misperception of our community, resulting in unintended exclusion
- Not feeling excluded
- There is a need for additional transparency about what the DEI Commission funds have been used for
- We do not want to feel like we are being forced to believe a certain thing

Solutions or Policies that had unanimous agreement

- Provide additional education that helps people better understand the City's Code

EXHIBIT 3- Draft Repeal and Replace Chapter

CHAPTER 9: EQUITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OVERVIEW

This chapter contains goals, policies, and programs that define how the City of Ellensburg can play a role in ensuring equity in access to City government programs, services, activities, and facilities to benefit all residents.

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

The City of Ellensburg is committed to creating a community that improves lives, supports all people, and provides residents with opportunities to participate in local government and to access community services. Doing so can help create a thriving local economy, and an environment in which individuals achieve their full potential.

The City of Ellensburg is also committed to ensuring its programs and activities do not discriminate, and are applied without regard to any individual's sex, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sexual orientation (including gender identity), pregnancy, age, marital status, military status, disability, or any other characteristic protected by law.

The goal of this chapter is to address ways in which the City can remove barriers, and foster a sense of community amongst all residents, by listening to the ideas, experiences, and concerns of all who live here. Providing equity in access to City programs, services, and facilities fosters understanding of opportunities and community engagement and participation.

Equity and Accessibility

Equity recognizes that advantages and barriers exist. As a result, we don't all start from the same place. Creating and supporting goals and policies that meet the community members where they are (but without advantaging or disadvantaging individuals based on protected characteristics), will help to remove systemic barriers that make accessing basic community services challenging is the desired outcome. Increasing accessibility to important resources and opportunities that best meet residents' needs helps all residents succeed.

Community Engagement

Policies that actively recruit participation and involvement and remove barriers to understanding and participation, fosters a sense of belonging and elevates the conversation for all. Listening tours, surveys, discussion groups, and use of a variety of media and print publications designed to be accessible to community members.

GOALS, POLICIES, & PROGRAMS

These goals, policies, and programs contain steps that the City of Ellensburg will take to create an equitable and safe community.

Goal-1

Provide opportunity for all people in Ellensburg to benefit equitably from City of Ellensburg services, processes, and investments, regardless of identity, ability, community, protected characteristics, or socioeconomic circumstances.

Policy A

Support Policies and Programs that increase accessibility to City services for all.

Program 1

Review City planning policies and strategic plans to ensure services, processes, and investments are considering equity and accessibility for all.

Program 2

Identify areas of City government where greater accessibility and accommodations are needed to increase access to all members of the public-

Program 3

Actively encourage participation from the public for community projects, events, and recreational activities, through a wide variety of media and information distribution methods.

Program 4

Develop nondiscriminatory methodologies to measure impact of equity, accessibility, engagement, and safety programs over time to continuously improve safety and access to public services, governance, and facilities.

Goal -2

Encourage and Foster Social Engagement to create a welcoming and Strong Community.

Policy A

Support civic education programs that actively engages the entire community, and encourages representation among local leadership, organizations, and agencies from the entire community.

Program 1

Regularly support events and celebrations that highlight the variety of cultural traditions within the community, and that are accommodating and accessible to all.

Program 2

Encourage the creation of shared spaces where cultural foods and traditions can be shared among all members of the community, as well as the creation of public spaces that are accommodating and accessible to all.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Work with Commissions to begin regular review of current City policies and procedures to ensure the City is actively engaging all community members, supporting equity and building a strong community.

2. Define Strong Community/ Strengthen Community (Commissions and Council)
3. Increase use of Community engagement and social media tools to help with local outreach in an accessible and nondiscriminatory way.
4. Develop a framework of accountability to measure and report progress.

POLICY CONNECTIONS:

The **Housing** chapter includes policies and land use designations that support the development of many types of housing to ensure that people who live and work in Ellensburg have adequate housing choices.

The **Transportation** chapter includes policies related to providing a variety of transportation networks that is available for all community members.

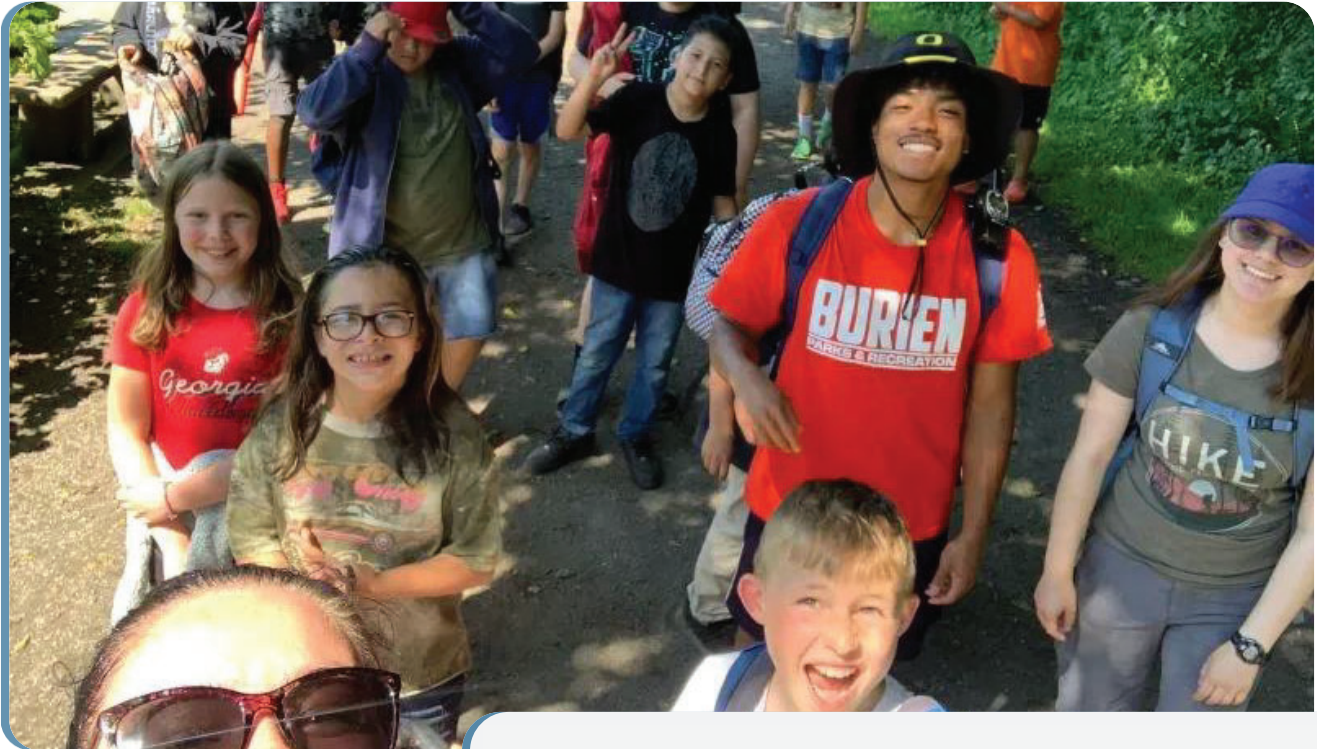
The **Capital Facilities and Utilities** chapter includes policies that focus on providing public facilities and utilities that are accessible and affordable to all community members, including access to the library, reasonably priced utilities, and access to data and technology. This chapter also provides goals centered around providing excellent public safety services.

The **Parks and Recreation** chapter includes policies that focus on providing citywide programs and services that meet all community and group needs, in addition to preserving historical areas and features, while also developing high quality, diversified cultural arts facilities and programs that increase community awareness, attendance, and participation opportunities.

The **Economic Development** chapter includes policies related to growing and sustaining local businesses, while creating opportunities for new businesses that can provide goods and services that meet the needs of the local and regional community.

Exhibit 4

1 Equity



What You Will Find in this Chapter

- ▶ Information about how the Plan was developed with equitable engagement and evaluation process.
- ▶ Goals and policies to provide equity in plans, processes, and investments.
- ▶ Implementation and ongoing tracking of equity outcomes.

Our Equity Value

People of all backgrounds, races, languages, genders, and abilities are provided full and equitable access to achieve their full potential and to thrive. Burien acknowledges that past inequitable planning led to injustices we have today.

An equity value is included in the Vision & Plan Introduction, and applies to all elements.

Introduction

Following are the ways in which the plan was crafted with Equity in mind and how the Plan will be evaluated to be accountable to the values, vision, goals, and policies.

Coordinated engagement through Shape Your City, targeted engagement with community-based organizations, and establishment of a multicultural Community Connectors program.

Plan development through adaptation of a Government Alliance on Race & Equity Toolkit:

- **Identify Outcomes:** Develop shared understanding of key outcomes that will guide the work (equity, resilience, and health metrics).
 - Measurable outcomes are included in each element and developed based on advisory body review and community visioning themes.
- **Study Context and Conditions:** Document history and current situation the community seeks to change.
 - The Housing Element was evaluated for racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion in housing.
 - The Housing Element evaluation was also applied to the Land Use Element and community design related policies.
- **Develop and Test Possible Strategies:** Identify opportunities for change and community-centered, actionable strategies. Test draft strategies by considering their distribution of burdens and benefits, and by gathering community feedback.
 - Each element was screened with a rubric considering benefits and burdens, ability to positively address priorities of overburdened communities, and reduce known disparities.
- **Finalize Recommendations and Support Implementation and Monitoring:** Track indicators for disparate impacts and build long-term community relationships.
 - Each Element has an implementation section with metrics and actions to evaluate the plan on an ongoing basis.
- **Evaluate results** against desired outcomes and share lessons learned.
 - The Comprehensive Plan is subject to a five-year progress report under the Growth Management Act (GMA).

Goals and Policies

Equity is defined here as the full and equal access to opportunities, empowerment, and resources so that all people achieve their full potential and thrive. The City of Burien acknowledges that government policies and practices have disproportionate impacts based on community and identity (such as race, ethnicity, language, housing status, ability, sexual orientation, and gender identity). For example, these disproportionate impacts result in less public investment and more barriers to civic participation for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (“BIPOC”) communities, immigrant communities, low-income communities, and people with disabilities. Local government has an ongoing responsibility to ensure that all its communities are given the opportunity to thrive and that all communities are valued, respected, and self-directed.

Goal 1.1 Provide opportunity for all people in Burien to benefit equitably from City of Burien services, processes, and investments, regardless of identity, community, or socioeconomic circumstances.

Policy 1.1-1 Analyze social equity impacts in the development of Burien’s strategic plans, policies, programs, and budgets. Structured questions and equity impact analyses will be used to ensure that equity is considered in decision-making processes.

Policy 1.1-2 In the development of public-facing Burien operations and processes such as permitting, communications, park programming, facilities programming, and customer service, provide equitable access for all communities and reduce barriers to public participation.

Policy 1.1-3 Ensure Burien practices foster a climate of equity and inclusivity. Burien is accountable for treating its staff equitably.

Policy 1.1-4 When developing Burien’s strategic plans, policies, and programs, meaningfully engage with the communities who will be most impacted by the plan, policy, or program. Outreach and engagement efforts shall actively seek input from voices that are historically underrepresented in civic decision-making processes, including BIPOC communities, immigrant communities, low-income communities, LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities, and unhoused people. Burien will meet communities where they are by adjusting and adapting to provide more inclusive outreach and engagement.

Policy 1.1-5 Ensure that community engagement opportunities are accessible and inclusive by incorporating a range of locations, times, and formats, use new and emerging technologies, as well as social media, to enhance understanding and participation. Provide accommodations that allow people with disabilities, people with childcare responsibilities, and people with first languages other than English to fully participate.

Policy 1.1-6 Develop Burien’s Capital Investment Plan with a goal of providing equitable access to municipal services such as roads, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, park facilities, and street trees.

Implementation

The Equity Element is implemented through:

- ▶ Burien Strategic Plan.
- ▶ Burien Capital Facility Plan and City Budget including the Capital Investment Plan.
- ▶ The metrics and actions of all other elements in this plan.