

AGENDA

ACCESS, ADVOCACY, EQUITY, & ENGAGEMENT COMMISSION

June 9, 2026

Hybrid Meeting In-person and via Zoom



Accessibility

The City of Ellensburg strives to make our services, programs, and activities readily accessible.

- Closed Captioning is available to Zoom viewers. To enable closed captioning, you will need to click on the "CC" button at the bottom of your Zoom screen and then select either "Show Subtitle" or "View Full Transcript."
- Members of the public who do not speak English or who have limited proficiency may request an interpreter if they wish to participate in public meetings.
- The City will provide reasonable accommodation for members of the public with disabilities.

Rules for Public Comment

Any person engaging in conduct that disrupts, disturbs, or otherwise impedes the orderly conduct of the meeting including but not limited to:

1. Unduly repetitive or irrelevant remarks;
2. Use of intimidating, threatening, or abusive language;
3. disobedience of an order to be seated or to discontinue further comments;
4. and/or engaging in violent behavior,

The City of Ellensburg strives to make our services, programs, and activities readily accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations will be made upon request. Please furnish the ADA Coordinator with your request in sufficient time for the City to provide a reasonable accommodation. A Request for Accommodation form may be obtained on the first floor of City Hall or by calling the City of Ellensburg ADA Coordinator at (509) 962-7222 or email ADAcordinator@ci.ellensburg.wa.us

will be deemed out of order and may be removed from the meeting and/or have his or her virtual microphone muted.

**CITY OF ELLENSBURG
ACCESS, ADVOCACY, EQUITY, & ENGAGEMENT
COMMISSION AGENDA Council Chambers
501 North Anderson Street
Ellensburg, WA 98926
And remotely via [Zoom](#)
Zoom Webinar ID: 860 4488 5223
Webinar Passcode: 960657
Tuesday, June 9, 2026
3:00 PM - Regular Meeting**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

1.A Phil Backlund, Amber Darting, M. Eliatamby-O'Brien, Nancy Goodloe, Judd Grey, Kathryn Martell, Lorena Medina-Dirksen, Cody Natland.

2. Approval of Agenda (No Public Comment)

3. Public Comment PUBLIC COMMENT RULES FOR ALL MEETING PARTICIPANTS

1. Each speaker's comments are to be limited to 3 MINUTES and must state their name and city of residence. 2. Speakers are cautioned not to engage in conduct that disrupts, disturbs or otherwise impedes the orderly conduct of the AAEE Commission meeting. 3. Comments must be related to the commission's business or over which the Commission has control. 4. Speakers may not identify themselves as candidates for elective public office or make any statements which assist or discuss the campaign of a candidate for elective office or discuss or campaign for or against a ballot proposition.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.A Approval of Minutes from May 12, 2026

4.B Approval of Minutes from May 19, 2026

5. New Business

5.A Review Chapter 2. Community Character and Voices (Public Comment Opportunity)

5.B AAEE Revised Draft Work Plan for Consideration

5.C Draft Resolution Council Commitment For June 15, 2026 Meeting

6. Liaison Reports Dr. Elvin Delgado and Ruben Cardenas - CWU; and Rhonda Schmidt - Ellensburg School District

7. Subcommittee Reports

8. Commission Representative Reports

9. Staff Report

9.A Staff Report

10. **Adjournment** Next Meeting: July 14, 2026 at 5 p.m. in Council Chambers



For more information on the Access, Advocacy, Equity, and Engagement Commission contact Public Information Officer Nicole Klauss at 509-925-8657.

CITY OF ELLENSBURG
Date of Meeting
Time of Meeting
Place of Meeting

**Minutes of Access, Advocacy, Equity, &
Engagement Commission Meeting**
May 12, 2026
3:00 PM
Council Chambers & Zoom

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Vice Chair Amber Hoefler called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Roll Call Present: Phil Backlund, Amber Darting, Judd Grey, Amber Hoefler, Cody Natland, and M. Eliatamby-O'Brien.

Also present: Nicole Klauss, staff member assigned to the AAEE Commission; Stacey Henderson, Planning Manager; Heidi Behrends Cerniwey, City Manager; Rhonda Schmidt, Ellensburg School District liaison; Ruben Cardenas, Interim Associate Vice President at Central Washington University; Ramona Bryant, League of Women Voters of Kittitas County; and 6 members of the public.

Vice Chair Hoefler allowed applicant Lorena Medina Dirksen to make an introduction.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Commissioner Cody Natland moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Amber Darting seconded the motion. There was no discussion. **Motion approved 6-0.**

3. Public Comment

Vice Chair Hoefler called for public comment. There was no public comment.

4. Approval of Commission Minutes from April 14, 2026 Meeting

Commissioner Phil Backlund moved to approve the meeting minutes from the April 14, 2026 DEI Commission meeting. Commissioner Cody Natland seconded the motion. There was no discussion. **Motion approved 6-0.**

5. New Business

A. Rhonda Schmidt provided an update on the Ellensburg School District's Department of Justice Settlement Agreement and what the district is doing next.

B. Planning Manager Stacey Henderson provided an update on the consultant's recommendation related to Chapter 9 of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. The Commission provided feedback. Kathryn Martell provided public comment.

C. Heidi Behrends Cerniwey provided a recommended work plan and spending plan for the AAEE Commission.

Commissioner Judd Grey moved to create a subcommittee to work with staff on the work plan draft. Commissioner Backlund seconded the motion. During discussion,

Draft

members indicated Grey, Backlund, and Eliatamby-O'Brien were interested in being on the subcommittee with Commissioner Grey as the subcommittee chair. **Motion approved 6-0.**

6. Liaison Reports

7. Subcommittee Reports

There was not sufficient time for this.

8. Commission Member Reports

There was not sufficient time for this.

9. Staff Report

There was not sufficient time for this.

10. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Drafted by Nicole Klauss, staff member assigned to the AAEE Commission

Drafted: 5/14/26

Approved:

CITY OF ELLENSBURG
Date of Meeting
Time of Meeting
Place of Meeting

**Minutes of Access, Advocacy, Equity, &
Engagement Commission Meeting**
May 19, 2026
3:00 PM
Council Chambers & Zoom

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Vice Chair Amber Hoefler called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

Roll Call Present: Phil Backlund, Amber Darting, Judd Grey, Amber Hoefler, Nancy Goodloe, and M. Eliatamby-O'Brien.

Also present: Nicole Klauss, staff member assigned to the AAEE Commission; Heidi Behrends Cerniwey, City Manager; Gretchen Delaford, Executive Assistant to the City Manager; and 1 member of the public.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Commissioner Judd Grey moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Phil Backlund seconded the motion. There was no discussion. **Motion approved 5-0.**

3. Public Comment

Vice Chair Hoefler called for public comment. There was no public comment.

4. Spending Plan Discussion

City staff provided an update on the spending plan recommendations.

Commissioner Amber Hoefler motioned to approve \$1,200 for Juneteenth Celebration for the music, \$1,500 for the America250 Community Picnic, and \$4,000 for 2026 grants. Commissioner Amber Darting seconded the motion. During discussion, commission members said they could consider funding the translation headsets next year if there is not enough budget later this year. They also mentioned there was not a time crunch associated with the rest of their budget, so they can revisit that later.

Motion approved 5-0.

Amber Darting, Judd Grey, and Nancy Goodloe will be on a grant subcommittee to update the 2025 document.

10. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 3:38 p.m.

Drafted by Nicole Klauss, staff member assigned to the AAEE Commission

Drafted: 5/19/26

Approved:

2. Community Character and Voices



Overview

Ellensburg lies at the heart of central Washington, 110 miles east of Seattle and 170 miles west of Spokane. Two interstate highways and various state highways provide access to and through the area, connecting the Cascades to the west and the farmland to the east. The city's footprint is approximately 7.6 square miles, with another 7.1 square miles in the Urban Growth Area (UGA) to accommodate for future growth.

Ellensburg's natural environment, rich history, and community characteristics all contribute to making this town unique.

Land Acknowledgment

The City of Ellensburg is located on the historic home of the K'ti'tas and Pshwánapam bands of Indigenous people. Today, these bands are part of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, a federally-recognized Native Nation constituted under the Treaty with the Yakamas of 1855. The Indigenous stewards of this land practiced a subsistence lifestyle through fishing, hunting, and gathering since time immemorial and remain committed stewards of this land, cherishing it, protecting it and using it, as instructed by their elders through generations, and actively practicing the traditions and culture as neighbors in the Ellensburg community.



Natural Environment

The City of Ellensburg sits at an elevation of 1,540 feet in a fertile basin next to the Yakima River, east of the Cascade mountain range, and on the western side of the Columbia Plateau. Enormous basaltic lava flows 15 million years ago, and a series of glacial flooding events after the ice age, shaped the landscape of central and eastern Washington. Ellensburg has a climate that experiences both hot summers and cold winters. Temperature patterns vary considerably within the seasons. The Cascade Mountains to the west effectively block much of the rain from the wetter side of the state, producing a dry climate with an average of less than ten inches of rainfall per year.

Ellensburg experiences four distinct seasons and a strong breeze in the spring and summer months. High summer temperatures (June through September) average about 80° Fahrenheit, and winter temperatures (December through March) average around 21° Fahrenheit. The Ellensburg basin is composed of agricultural land with a significant portion located within the 100-year floodplain. The surrounding topography includes snow-capped mountains, irrigated valley land, desert terrain, and two major rivers: the Yakima and the Columbia.

Ellensburg's History

The earliest known inhabitants of Kittitas Valley were Psch-wan-wap-pams also known as the Kittitas band of the Yakama or Upper Yakama Tribe. The Kittitas Valley was one of the few places in Washington where both camas and kouse plants grew. For this and other reasons the valley was an important gathering place for regional tribes who congregated to harvest these foods, socialize, fish, and trade.

Though fur traders and Catholic missions had established themselves earlier, Euro-American settlers in greater numbers began moving into the Kittitas Valley in the early 1860s. By the end of the 1860s, a trading post known as Robber's Roost was established near the present corner of Third and Main Streets. In 1871 John Alden Shoudy, who in 1875 platted the town streets and named the community Ellensburg in honor of his wife, Mary Ellen, purchased this post. In 1894, the United States Post Office requested the 'h' be dropped from the City's name.

During this platting period, The Northern Pacific Railroad donated land in hopes that the town would be a rail-based center for the area's abundant farmland, forests, and mines. Ellensburg grew slowly until plans for rail access were completed and the 1886 arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad helped stimulate markets in cattle, dairy products, timber, wool, and hay. Community boosters hoped Ellensburg would be the new state capitol due to its central location. Such speculation even led to the construction of a mansion to house the future Governor on the corner of what is now Chestnut Street and Third Avenue.

A disastrous fire on July 4, 1889 changed the course of the community's history. The fire, fanned by Ellensburg's famous winds, destroyed most of the business district and many homes. Although the community put forth a heroic effort and rebuilt its downtown within the year, Olympia was ultimately chosen as the state capital. The efforts to place the state capital did help bring an important element to Ellensburg; during the State Legislature's first session, Washington State Normal School (now Central Washington University) was established. In 1891 the doors opened for 86 students. Today Central



Washington University has an on-campus enrollment of approximately 6,700, occupies more than 300 acres, and is the county's largest employer.

The timing and coordination of the downtown reconstruction also helped by producing a downtown with a unified and attractive appearance. Later Victorian architectural styles with a few early twentieth-century Neoclassic and Art Deco-styled buildings dominate downtown. The historic character and classic urban streetscapes define the community and serve as one of its strongest assets. Due in large part to community-wide efforts that began in the 1960s to restore and rehabilitate downtown, most of the downtown core remains as originally constructed. By 1972, many of the downtown improvements seen today were being implemented, including streetlamps, paver-stone sidewalks, and mini-parks. The City and the Ellensburg Downtown Association have continued to work on improving and maintaining the vitality of downtown. Keeping the downtown area as the heart of financial, service, government, and retail activities was made formal policy in the City's first comprehensive plan in 1975. The importance of Ellensburg's downtown has been reaffirmed in the 1995, 2006, 2017, and now 2026 Comprehensive Plan update processes.



Today, the community of Ellensburg has established its position as a central, rooted, and unique community influenced by the history and future of agriculture, university students and faculty that represent nearly half of the population, families that have been here for generations, and newcomers that have all chosen to call Ellensburg home. Community members celebrate Ellensburg's year-round recreational activities, numerous downtown and university events and programs, variety of performing and visual arts, and diversity of shopping and dining opportunities.

To the world outside Kittitas County, Ellensburg is most famous for its annual Fair and Rodeo. The Ellensburg Rodeo was founded in 1922 through the combined efforts of local ranchers and cowboys, the Kittitas County Fair organization, local businesspersons, and the Yakama Nation. The Ellensburg Rodeo served as a nostalgic celebration of the frontier lifestyle, where townspeople could join ranchers, farmers, and Native Americans in an annual gathering. The Fair and Rodeo has become a way to foster business and promote Ellensburg's identity as a destination.

Community Characteristics

Understanding Ellensburg's demographic, housing, and economic characteristics provides important context for planning. These conditions and trends help inform the goals and policies in the chapters that follow and support decision-making that responds to the community's evolving needs.



Ellensburg is the largest city in Kittitas County and serves as the county’s primary economic and cultural center. The City’s estimated 2025 population is 21,260, representing approximately 43 percent of the county’s overall population.¹ Ellensburg has experienced steady population growth over the past several decades, reinforcing its role as the center for urban services and activity in the region. In spite of post-pandemic reduction in campus enrollment, the presence of Central Washington University is a defining feature of the community, significantly shaping its demographic profile, housing market, and local economy.

Demographics and Trends

Ellensburg has a notably young population, with a median age of 25 years. More than a quarter of residents are between the ages of 20 and 24, reflecting the strong influence of the university and its student population. At the same time, the City includes a smaller but growing share of older adults, with approximately 10 percent of residents age 65 and over, consistent with broader regional trends toward an aging population.²

The community is predominantly White (approximately 79 percent), with growing racial and ethnic diversity. About 13 percent of residents identify as Hispanic or Latino, along with smaller percentages of Black, Asian, and multiracial populations.

Income and Economic Characteristics

Ellensburg’s median household income is approximately \$55,400, which is lower than state averages and reflects the presence of students and early-career workers.³ As in many college communities, income levels vary widely, with student households and renter households generally earning less than owner households. Owner households have substantially higher median incomes than renter households, highlighting disparities across tenure.

The local economy is supported by education, government, healthcare, and service sectors, with Central Washington University serving as a major employer and economic driver. While the community benefits from a stable institutional presence, income disparities and affordability challenges remain important considerations.

Community Foundation

Community Vision and Strategic Direction

In June of 2026, the Ellensburg City Council adopted a new five-year Strategic Vision for 2026-2031 after holding a retreat to consider strategic questions, with input from the public, who were invited to attend and participate. The Strategic Vision represents the most important issues facing the City of Ellensburg and establishes precedence for expenditure of staff and other City resources. While the Strategic Vision has a shorter timeframe than the Comprehensive Plan, the priorities identified by the City Council help inform the policies and strategies included in this long-range plan. Together, the Strategic Vision and the

¹ Washington State Office of Financial Management. [April 1, 2025 Population of Cities, Towns, and Counties](#).

² U.S. Census Bureau. ACS 2020–2024 5-Year Estimates, Demographic and Housing Estimates ([Table DP05](#)).

³ U.S. Census Bureau. ACS 2020–2024 5-Year Estimates, Financial Characteristics ([Table S2503](#)).



Comprehensive Plan help ensure that day-to-day decisions and long-term planning efforts work toward shared community goals.

The Strategic Vision identifies five strategic pillars for Ellensburg [subject to revisions June 2026]:

1. Sustainable Economic Development
2. Infrastructure and Energy
3. Safety, Civic Engagement, and Cultural Inclusion
4. Affordable Housing and Living
5. Dedicated Parks and Recreation Resources

These priorities reinforce many of the goals and policies found throughout this Comprehensive Plan, which help inform not only physical planning decisions, but also how the City approaches community engagement, participation, accessibility, and connection.

Community Guiding Principles

As Ellensburg continues to grow and evolve, themes related to access, engagement, and belonging provide important context for how the City approaches inclusive public participation and community-building efforts. The following guiding principles are synthesized from Periodic Update outreach efforts to date, and reflect the community values and priorities discussed throughout the following section. They are intended to support a welcoming, accessible, and connected community and provide overarching guidance for implementation of the Comprehensive Plan across all elements.

- ◆ **Inclusive Engagement:** Support inclusive and accessible community engagement opportunities that encourage participation from people with varied backgrounds, experiences, identities, and needs.
- ◆ **Accessible Information and Services:** Support equitable access to public information, City services, programs, community resources, and participation opportunities, including efforts to reduce language, communication, and accessibility barriers.
- ◆ **Welcoming and Respectful Community:** Foster a welcoming community where residents feel respected, safe, supported, and connected, and where people from varied backgrounds and experiences feel a sense of belonging.
- ◆ **Reducing Barriers:** Work to identify and reduce barriers to participation in civic, social, and community life, including physical, financial, cultural, transportation, informational, and language barriers.
- ◆ **Community Connection:** Encourage opportunities for cultural sharing, collaboration, relationship-building, and community connection among residents, organizations, businesses, institutions, and community partners.

Community Voices

Access, Engagement, & Belonging

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. Creating a community where people can thrive requires awareness to the lived experiences of those who may



encounter obstacles—whether physical, social, economic, or cultural—that impact their ability to navigate daily life or engage with local government. Doing so can help create a thriving local economy, retain our residents and attract new ones, and foster an environment where individuals can achieve their full potential.

Community conversations and engagement efforts in recent years have highlighted that residents do not always experience Ellensburg in the same way. While many people describe Ellensburg as welcoming and community-oriented, some residents have shared experiences of exclusion, unwelcoming behavior, or barriers that affect their ability to access opportunities, feel safe, or feel like they belong. These conversations reinforced the need for City government and staff to be intentional about listening to residents, understanding where barriers exist, and working toward solutions that foster participation, fairness, and a sense of belonging for all who live here. By doing so, City government and staff can help strengthen community connection and support practices that help all people feel welcomed and included in Ellensburg’s civic, social, and economic life.

Why This Matters in Ellensburg

Ellensburg is home to residents with a wide range of life experiences, identities, cultural backgrounds, abilities, and circumstances. Not everyone moves through our community with the same level of ease or access, and some residents encounter challenges that others may never see. When the City government and staff understand these differences and plans with them in mind, it helps ensure that public services, facilities, and community spaces are welcoming, functional, and safe for everyone.

Bringing awareness to where people may face barriers, whether physical, social, economic, cultural, linguistic, or informational, allows City government and staff to identify gaps early and respond in ways that strengthen trust and connection. When residents feel seen, valued, and able to participate fully in community life, the whole City benefits. This approach supports a healthy civic environment, fosters stronger neighborhoods, and contributes to a resilient local economy.

Proactively recognizing where barriers may exist, listening to community experiences, and continually improving how City government and staff engage with and serves the public are important parts of supporting a welcoming and connected community. By building a community where all residents can participate and feel a sense of belonging, Ellensburg positions itself to grow in a way that is inclusive, collaborative, and forward-looking.

Fostering a Sense of Belonging

Creating a community where everyone feels they belong requires us to pay attention to the experiences of residents who may not always feel fully seen or heard. When we make space for voices that have been, or continue to be, overlooked, we build trust, strengthen connection, and help ensure that the future we shape reflects the needs and hopes of all who live here. It is important for City government and staff to acknowledge and embrace the range of 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 current policies or ways of engaging residents. The City seeks to promote new ways of sharing space with others, sharing traditions, foods, and stories. In doing so, City government and staff can



strengthen a sense of community and connection through outreach, regular events, and creating spaces accessible to all.

To support all residents, City government and staff will continue to advance goals and policies that actively recruit participation and involvement from all residents within the community, foster a sense of belonging, and engage those who experience barriers to social and cultural participation. 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. Creating and supporting goals and policies that meet the community members where they are will help to remove the barriers that make accessing or engaging with basic community services challenging. Increasing accessibility to important resources and opportunities that best meet residents' varying needs helps all residents succeed.

Community Engagement for the 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update

Public input is the heart of the Comprehensive Plan process. The Washington State Growth Management Act requires that cities encourage early and continuous public involvement when developing and updating comprehensive plans. Community engagement helps ensure that the plan reflects the values, priorities, and ideas of the people who live and work in Ellensburg.

City Council adopted the 2026 Comprehensive Plan update process's Public Participation Plan to provide multiple opportunities for community members to learn about the plan and share their perspectives. Engagement activities were structured to reach a broad range of residents through a combination of in-person events, online surveys, and digital outreach.

The first community open house for the Comprehensive Plan update was held in September 2025. At this event, community members were invited to share their thoughts about housing, transportation, parks and recreation, climate and environmental priorities, and the overall future of the community. Participants also provided input on what they value most about Ellensburg and how they would prioritize future investments in public services and infrastructure.

To expand participation beyond in-person events, City staff launched a Comprehensive Plan webpage that serves as a central location for information about the update process, upcoming opportunities for participation, and background materials related to the plan.

A series of online surveys and mini-polls were also developed to gather more detailed feedback on specific topics. The first survey focuses on housing and was open for approximately one month. Additional surveys addressed community character, land use and infrastructure, and economic development. These surveys allow community members to share their perspectives at their convenience and provide valuable input to help shape future policies.

In addition to these activities, a climate task force was convened to provide focused input on climate-related planning issues. Outreach related to transportation planning has also been conducted through the City's transportation planning efforts and consultant-led engagement.

The City is working with community partners and local organizations to promote these engagement opportunities and encourage participation from a wide range of community members. A second



Saturday Markets

Over the course of the planning process, City staff attended Saturday Markets and conducted a “penny poll” to gather feedback on community priorities. Participants were given pennies to allocate among six topic categories based on which issues they viewed as the highest priorities for Ellensburg’s future. They could distribute their pennies across multiple categories or allocate all of them toward a single priority area.

More than 320 Ellensburg residents participated in the penny poll. Parks, Recreation, and Open Space received the highest level of support, followed by Housing and Neighborhoods. However, all six categories received support from a significant percentage of participants, reflecting broad community interest in a range of planning topics and future investments. Figure 2-3 shows the results of the penny poll.

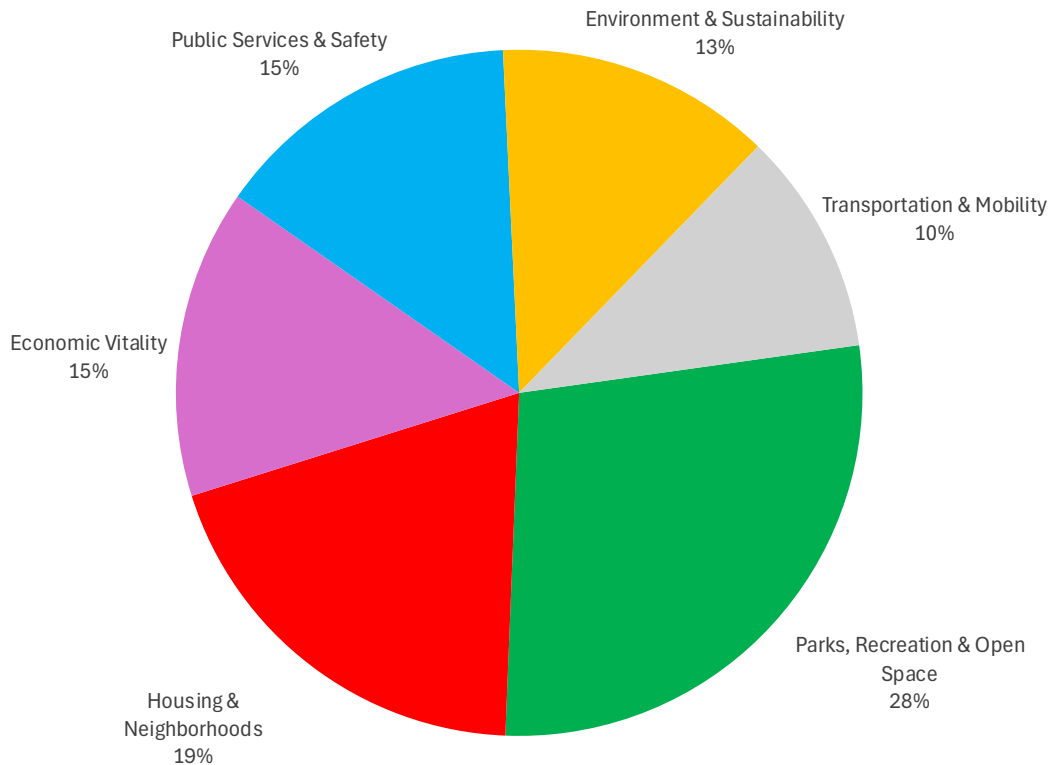


Figure 2-3. Penny Poll Results

Interviews

The Comprehensive Plan team conducted a series of group interviews to gather input from key partners, stakeholders, and residents on specific topics. Interview topics included housing, capital facilities and utilities, economic development, and community-based organizations. Input from the interviews has guided the goals and policies in this Comprehensive Plan as well as information presented throughout the plan.



Surveys

Throughout the Comprehensive Plan process, City staff and consultants hosted an online open house which provided Ellensburg residents with the opportunity to respond to surveys and mini-polls on a variety of planning topics. The online engagement effort included one longer Housing Survey and three shorter mini-polls focused on Land Use and Infrastructure, Economic Development, and Community Voices. The Housing Survey was open from early March through mid-April 2026, while the mini-polls were available from late March through early May 2026. Collectively, these online surveys helped gather feedback on community priorities, concerns, and ideas related to Ellensburg’s future growth and development.

Housing Survey Summary

Responses: 346

The Housing Survey was intended to better understand residents’ experiences with housing availability, affordability, and housing needs within Ellensburg. Sixty-five percent of respondents own their home in Ellensburg, while 35 percent rent their home. Of homeowners, over 50 percent stated that, during their homebuying process, available homes felt overpriced, and 33 percent felt that most homes in their price range required repairs. Of those with a home loan, 45 percent reported spending between 30 and 50 percent of their household income on housing costs, with another 11 percent spending more than 50 percent of their income on housing costs. Approximately 19 percent of respondents stated that they have experienced housing exclusion or discrimination in Ellensburg.

Overall, survey responses highlighted ongoing concerns related to housing affordability, housing condition, and access to housing opportunities within the community.

Land Use and Infrastructure Mini-Poll Summary

Responses: 144

This mini-poll focused on land use, infrastructure, and community growth priorities. The poll asked respondents about future growth, infrastructure investments, provision of utilities and services, and neighborhood development priorities.

Respondents identified protecting natural areas and open space (53 percent) and planning for reliable infrastructure systems (49 percent) as the top priorities for Ellensburg over the next 20 years. Improving parks and recreation access, supporting business areas, and expanding housing options also received strong support from respondents.

Most respondents supported allowing a mix of housing, businesses, and services within walking distance of neighborhoods, although some expressed concerns about growth and maintaining neighborhood character. Upgrading aging water, sewer, stormwater, and utility systems was identified as the top public investment priority, while keeping utility rates affordable and ensuring reliable utility service were identified as the highest priorities for future utility planning.



Economic Development Mini-Poll Summary

Responses: 126

Questions in the Economic Development mini-poll focused on jobs, business development, access to services, local industries, and the future economic identity of Ellensburg.

Respondents identified more job opportunities (59 percent), affordable housing options (41 percent), improved access to healthcare (37 percent), and more local shopping options (36 percent) as the most important priorities for Ellensburg's economic future. Community amenities that attract employers and workers, along with well-located sites for business development, were identified as important strategies for supporting business growth and retention.

Retail, healthcare, and manufacturing were the industries most often identified by respondents for future expansion in Ellensburg, and supporting locally owned businesses and balancing job growth with community character were identified as the highest priorities when attracting new businesses. Looking ahead 20 years, respondents would like Ellensburg's economy to continue to be known for a small business, agriculture and food systems, and outdoor recreation and tourism.

Community Voices Mini-Poll Summary

Responses: 121

The Community Voices mini-poll focused on community connection, belonging, participation, and community identity. The poll asked respondents about how welcoming and inclusive Ellensburg feels, barriers to participation in civic life, and priorities for strengthening community engagement in the future.

Most respondents reported feeling welcome and connected within the Ellensburg community. Friendly people, community events and festivals, and downtown businesses were identified as the strongest contributors to a welcoming and inclusive community.

Respondents identified lack of awareness about participation opportunities, meeting schedules, and meetings feeling unwelcoming or difficult to engage in as common barriers to participating in City meetings and decision-making. Respondents identified better communication about City topics and events, along with expanded online or hybrid participation options, as the most important ways to improve community participation and engagement.

Looking ahead 20 years, many respondents emphasized the importance of maintaining community character while balancing growth, supporting local businesses, improving communication and trust in local government, and creating more community events, recreation opportunities, and family-oriented amenities.

Key Takeaways Across Engagement Activities

- ◆ Respondents consistently emphasized the importance of balancing future growth with preservation of Ellensburg's community character, small-town identity, open space, natural areas, and quality of life.



- ◆ Housing affordability and availability emerged as major concerns across surveys and write-in responses, with many participants expressing interest in a wider range of housing options and price points.
- ◆ Reliable and affordable infrastructure, including utilities, transportation, and public facilities, was identified as a major community priority.
- ◆ Respondents expressed strong support for local businesses, downtown vitality, parks, recreation opportunities, agriculture, and family-oriented amenities as defining features of Ellensburg’s future.
- ◆ Economic opportunity, including jobs, access to services, healthcare access, and support for locally owned businesses, was identified as important to maintaining a strong and resilient local economy.
- ◆ Community feedback highlighted a desire for improved communication, transparency, and more accessible opportunities for public participation in City decision-making, including expanded online and hybrid engagement options.
- ◆ Respondents expressed interest in creating a more accessible, inclusive, and connected community, including improving opportunities for participation in civic and community life.
- ◆ Written comments reflected a wide range of perspectives about growth, governance, and housing, underscoring the importance of inclusive engagement and long-term planning as Ellensburg continues to grow.

More to Come

[This section will be updated as engagement activities are completed and more information and feedback is available]

Chapter 9 Material to Be Incorporated into Other Elements of the Comprehensive Plan

The following Goals, Policies, and Programs will be incorporated into other elements of the Comprehensive Plan as outlined below. This section will be deleted from this chapter once the content has been migrated into the other elements.

- ◆ **Goal 1: Increase accessibility to City Services, Projects, Programs, and Events.**
 - Move to Capital Facilities and Utilities Element under Goal CFU-1 (provision of services).
 - Revise/strengthen language to focus on equitable service delivery, infrastructure, ADA compliance and add "equitable access for all residents."
- ◆ **Policy 1A: Support policies and programs that increase accessibility to City services for all, guided by an awareness of varied community needs and potential barriers.**
 - Move to Capital Facilities and Utilities Element under Policy CFU-1A.
 - Revise to add clarity around measurable actions for language access, ADA, service standards. Policy should address implementation of accessible City services.



- ◆ **Program 1A-1: Provide increased access to government documents in multiple languages and easily accessible assistance for those who may need additional support.**
 - Move to Capital Facilities and Utilities Element under Policy CFU-4A (tech/communication).
 - Revise to create policy addressing language access and assistance as part of service delivery.
- ◆ **Program 1A-2: Identify areas of City government where greater physical accessibility and accommodations are needed to increase access to all members of the public.**
 - Move to Capital Facilities and Utilities Element under Policy CFU-1A.
 - Strong Capital Facilities fit – tie to facility planning and upgrades.
- ◆ **Program 1B-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.**
 - Move to Parks & Recreation Element under Goal PR-2 (recreation facilities and programs).
 - Recreation affordability review - ties directly into equitable access and LOS standards for Parks & Recreation.
- ◆ **Program 1B-4: Support civic education programs that actively engage community members from many backgrounds, and encourage diverse representation among local leadership, organizations, and agencies.**
 - Move to Economic Development Element under Policy ED-3 (grow and sustain the workforce).
 - Fits in with Economic Development as it relates to workforce/leadership pipelines.
- ◆ **Goal 2: Foster Understanding, Cultural Awareness, and Belonging within the Community.**
 - Move to Parks & Recreation Element under Policy PR 2.1 (citywide programs and services).
 - Revise language; vague as-is. Could be reworded for goal intent – reframe around inclusive community spaces and programming + cultural awareness.
- ◆ **Policy 2A: Encourage cultural sharing.**
 - Move to Parks & Recreation Element under Policy PR 3.3 (cultural arts programs and resources).
 - Would be a strong fit with arts programming. Revise/add more specific language and tie to events, programming, and public space design.
- ◆ **Program 2A-1: Regularly support events and celebrations that highlight the variety of cultural traditions within the community.**
 - Move to Parks & Recreation Element under Policy PR 3.3 (cultural arts programs and resources).
 - Fits existing Parks & Recreation programming structure; revise/strengthen to clarify the "how" (measurable actions).
- ◆ **Program 2A-2: Encourage the creation of 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.**
 - Move – split between:
 - Parks & Recreation Element under Policy PR 2.2 (recreational facilities): Programming and gathering.
 - Land Use Element under Policy LU-1B (complements Program 4, placemaking): Siting/design of public spaces



- ◆ **Program 2A-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.**
 - Move to Economic Development Element under Goal ED-1 (strengthen city partnerships).
 - Strong school/community relationship focus fits into Economic Development policies; strong tie to city partnerships.
- ◆ **Program 2B-2: Support the development of a framework to identify and address areas where individuals experience barriers within our local institutions.**
 - Move – split between:
 - Capital Facilities Element under Goal CFU-1 (provision of services): Equitable service delivery (implementation).
 - Environment Element under Goal E-1 (address impacts of climate change to public): Tie directly to Environmental Justice requirements (GMA/Commerce checklist); strengthen language consistent with GMA requirements.
- ◆ **Program 2B-3: Collaborate with local organizations to help local businesses support a broad spectrum of community members from different backgrounds and cultures.**
 - Move to Economic Development Element under Goal ED-1 (strengthen city partnerships).
 - Align with small business support strategies – already partially exists in Policy ED-1A, Program 4 (potential to merge).
- ◆ **Goal 3: Increase accessibility to local services and community resources for all residents.**
 - Redundant – combine w/ Goal 1 into one access-focused goal (and move to Capital Facilities and Utilities Element).
- ◆ **Policy 3A: Ensure that high quality service programs are available, accessible, and utilized by all in order to support residents’ basic needs.**
 - Move to Capital Facilities and Utilities Element under Goal CFU-1 (provision of services).
 - Avoid duplication of Goal 1 policies; potential to merge with Goal 1, Policy A. Tie to service provision standards.
- ◆ **Program 3A-1: Partner with local health and social services to identify strategies for making their services accessible by all means of transportation.**
 - Move to Transportation Element under Goal T-3 (transportation network providing connections to key destinations).
 - Strong multimodal access policy. Expand to add "access to essential services."
- ◆ **Program 3A-2: Advocate for low income, residential care facilities, and other housing for aging people to be located close to services and amenities.**
 - Move to Housing Element under Goal H-2 (variety of housing types/densities to meet community needs).
 - Strong fit with existing housing goals addressing GMA housing + land use integration. Consider strengthening language to more clearly define how the City will support or advance this objective.
- ◆ **Program 3A-3: Encourage and support programs that seek to provide residents with access to health care providers with varied expertise and backgrounds who can respond to varying cultural and medical needs.**



- Move to Economic Development Element under Goal ED-1 (strengthen city partnerships).
- The focus on providers/services fits well into Economic Development.
- ◆ **Policy 3B: Encourage healthy activity and lifestyle by making recreational resources and opportunities accessible and welcoming to all residents.**
 - Move to Parks & Recreation Element under Policy PR 2.1 (citywide programs and services).
 - Fits well into Parks & Recreation goals. There is a related GMA/Commerce checklist requirement for consideration of EJ and avoiding worsening environmental health disparities – could directly address this requirement by strengthening policy language to add affordability and inclusivity.
- ◆ **Program 3B-1: Provide opportunities for healthy activity in safe and accessible public spaces for all residents.**
 - Move to Parks & Recreation Element under Policy PR 2.3 (design and access standards).
 - Fits well into Parks & Recreation goals.
- ◆ **Program 3B-2: Encourage communication between local businesses, organizations, and schools, to coordinate food pantries and local food distribution.**
 - Move – split between:
 - Economic Development Element under Goal ED-1 (strengthen city partnerships): Food systems/businesses (strengthen language beyond “encourage” – consider partnerships, infrastructure).
 - Land Use Element under Policy LU-1B (complements Program 3 – healthy food purveyors): Food access as it relates to EJ + health (good partner to Program 3 under Policy LU-1B).

Policy Connections

The **Land Use** chapter contains a set of policies on creating public spaces that are accommodating and accessible to all users.

The **Housing** chapter contains a set of goals to support housing options for residents of all incomes, abilities, and ages.

The **Transportation** chapter contains a set of goals on transportation accessibility to essential services.

The **Capital Facilities and Utilities** chapter contains a set of goals and policies to ensure equitable access to city services for all residents.

The **Parks and Recreation** chapter contains a set of goals and policies to improve access to recreation facilities and programs and support cultural programming.

The **Economic Development** chapter contains a set of goals and policies to support civic engagement with community members from diverse backgrounds and strengthen city partnerships.

The **Climate and Environment** chapter contains a set of goals to identify impacts of climate change through an environmental justice framework.



- Community Conversations on City Policy Topics
- Proclamations/Days of Recognition
- Review Commission Roles - Update interview questions for membership
- Guidance on targeted outreach
- Translation and Interpretation Resources –develop and retain a list of local interpreters and translation services to aid City staff and refer other agencies as well
- Consult on workshops/event planning and outreach strategies
- Cultivate access points to distribute information to marginalized and micro-communities
- Develop workshops to educate staff on access/trust building for all groups in Policy Reviews – Staff Initiated
- Fees, rate increases
- Housing app. Awareness
- City grant applications
- Plan reviews
- Comp Plan Climate Element (May/June)
- Chapter 9 Update
- Comp Plan open house this summer
- Aquatic facility planning
- Review Comms plans, community surveys, and outreach strategies for all City-wide plans
- Consider role in facilitating engagement activities with staff/consultant guidance/support
- Guidelines toolbox – accessibility
- Civic education – Ellensburg Academy? Civic Engagement in Kittitas County America 250 event?

Events

- Juneteenth
- America 250
- Bike Month
- Ellensburg Academy (March)

Measure Impact

- Qualitative and Quantitative

- Survey – Social Scientists
- Barriers Identified / Removed
- Demographics tracking

AAEE Commission 2026 Work Plan Summarized

For the remainder of 2026, the AAEE Commission will focus on:

- Develop Spending Plan for 2026 (Requires Council Approval)
- Develop 2027 funding and policy for ongoing AAEE grants to establish a sustainable funding source and align timelines with other City grant programs. Forward to Council for consideration. (Urgent)
- Review and participate in the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update (Chapter 9 and others) – Open House in July 2026
- Develop guidance on reaching marginalized groups for outreach for City-sponsored community events (to incorporate in AAEE grants)
- Support and participate in City-sponsored community events that are meant to bring the community together
- Participate in civic education opportunities
- Develop metrics and other standards to measure impact of committee work over time (Subcommittee/Staff)

Action Item	Responsible Party	Due Date
2026 Spending Plan	Commission or Subcommittee/Staff Support	June 2026 (approved 6/1/26) – remaining \$3,300 unallocated
Grant Policy -update with AAEE framework for 2026 and future years -develop assessment tool to measure participant outcomes -establish 2027 process and sustainable funding request	Subcommittee/Staff Support	June/July 2026
Comp Plan Elements Periodic update; Chapter 9; Housing; Economic Development, etc. -Consultation -Open House -Additional Outreach -Community Conversation	Commission or Subcommittee/Staff Support	July 2026 – Open House December 2026 - Complete

<p>Administrative -Review Commission Roles -Update interview questions for membership</p>	<p>Commission or Subcommittee/Staff Support</p>	<p>July 2026</p>
<p>Outreach Guidance -workshops/event planning and outreach strategies -Cultivate access points to distribute information to marginalized and micro-communities -Develop workshops to educate staff on access/trust building for all groups in community (all services)</p>	<p>Subcommittee/Staff</p>	<p>December 2026</p>
<p>Community Events -Juneteenth -Fourth of July/Independence Day/America 250 -And others partnership opportunities</p>	<p>Commission or Subcommittee/Staff Support</p>	<p>September 2026</p>
<p>Build Metrics and Tools to measure outcomes and impact of Commission -engagement actions -grant activities -events</p>	<p>Subcommittee and Staff</p>	<p>December 2026</p>
<p>Access to Civic Education (Prepare item for Constitution Day or Ellensburg Academy)</p>	<p>Subcommittee</p>	<p>March 2027</p>
<p>Continue Ongoing -Proclamations/Days of Recognition</p>	<p>Subcommittee</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-13__

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ELLENSBURG WASHINGTON, DECLARING ITS COMMITMENT TO BE AN INVITING, EQUITABLE, SAFE, AND UNITED COMMUNITY FOR ALL PERSONS WHO LIVE, WORK, AND VISIT HERE

WHEREAS, the Ellensburg City Council believes that the strength and vitality of our community come from the rich diversity of people, cultures, traditions, experiences, and faiths represented throughout our city; and

WHEREAS, the City Council recognizes, respects, and welcomes the voices of residents, special interest groups, private and civic organizations, nonprofit organizations, public and private partners, faith-based communities, and others who actively participate in City government processes and programs to strengthen communication and deepen understanding of community needs; and

WHEREAS, the City Council recognizes and upholds the right of every individual to be treated fairly and to live with dignity, respect, and freedom from discrimination or targeting based on faith, race, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, age, ability, ethnicity, housing status, economic status, or any other protected or marginalized status;

WHEREAS, the City Council believes that acts of harassment, bullying, intimidation, violence, or hate based on any such status threaten the strength, safety, and unity of this community; and

WHEREAS, the City Council believes that community leaders, together with every resident, share responsibility for building a strong and united community by refusing to remain silent in the face of discrimination, harassment, or hate, and by choosing instead to uphold human rights, fairness, public safety, and social well-being; and

WHEREAS, the City Council strives to foster a City environment where robust political discourse and peaceful dissent are valued while violence, intimidation and threats to individuals or groups are firmly rejected; and

WHEREAS, the City Council is committed to ensuring that the City of Ellensburg moves forward toward a future that is welcoming, equitable, united, and safe for every person who lives, works, and visits our community.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Council of the City of Ellensburg, Washington, as follows:

Section 1. Commitment to Community Values

As elected representatives, we invite all residents and visitors to join us in a shared commitment to making Ellensburg an inviting, equitable, safe, and united community for everyone.

Section 2. Commitment to Listening and Building Connections

The City Council affirms its commitment to continuing the work of listening, engaging, and building relationships across our community in a spirit of understanding, respect, and unity.

Section 3. Commitment to Civil Discourse

The City Council is committed to fostering a community where respectful and thoughtful political discourse, as well as peaceful dissent, are valued. At the same time, the Council firmly rejects violence, intimidation, and threats against any individual or group.

Section 4. Commitment to Access and Inclusion

The City Council further resolves to work in partnership with its advisory boards and commissions, community organizations, and community members to incorporate principles of access, equity, engagement, and inclusion into City programs, services, facilities, policies, and practices for all members of our community.

Section 5. Commitment to Moving Forward Together

The City Council is committed to working collaboratively with all members of the community to move forward in a manner that ensures every person is heard, respected, and valued.

ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of Ellensburg this ____ day of _____, 2026.

Mayor

Attest:

City Clerk



Meeting Date: June 9, 2026
City of Ellensburg
Access, Advocacy, Equity, & Engagement Commission
Agenda Report

Agenda Subject: Staff Report
Submitted by:
Department: City Manager

Suggested Motion/Action:
Listen to staff updates

Background/Summary:
Staff Updates:

- New AAEE Commission members will be onboarded after this meeting and staff will send an updated contact list to members.
- The AAEE Commission will be transitioned to a new City staff member(s) this summer. Staff will work on making the transition as smooth as possible.

Upcoming City events and activities:

- The City of Ellensburg is seeking volunteers to serve on an ad hoc committee that will consider possible updates to the City’s taxi code. Community members with an interest in local transportation or those with current taxi licenses are encouraged to apply. The committee is expected to include about five members and will provide input as the City reviews the current code and considers whether updates may be needed. A commitment to attend up to five meetings will be required. If you are interested in serving on the ad hoc committee, please call the City Manager’s office at (509) 962-7221 or email citymanager@ellensburgwa.gov and provide your name, meeting availability, and a brief statement regarding why you would like to be appointed to the ad hoc committee. Reply before June 20, 2026.
- Touch A Truck is set for 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Wednesday, June 17 at Rotary Park, 1200 W. 5th Ave. Kids can see, touch, climb on, and learn about public agency vehicles and equipment in a safe environment.
- Coffee With City Council will be held on June 17 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Rotary Park during the Touch A Truck event.
- Join us for an afternoon of community at the 4th Annual Ellensburg Juneteenth Celebration on Friday, June 19. Grab your lawn chairs and picnic baskets to enjoy the evening with community in celebration of freedom. There will be lawn games and music. Visit the Kittitas County Historical museum to check out their Juneteenth exhibit, highlighting the history and culture of African Americans in Kittitas County.

Extended museum hours from 10 a.m. - 7 p.m. on June 19, 2026. Learn more:
<https://libguides.lib.cwu.edu/juneteenth>.

- The City of Ellensburg will be hosting a community-wide America 250 Community Picnic at Unity Park on Saturday, July 4, 2026, from 2-6 p.m. to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States. This event will bring together residents, families, veterans, artists, and local musicians for a relaxed gathering that reflects Ellensburg's community spirit and creative cultural identity. Designed as a free, family-friendly event, the picnic will combine live music, interactive art, and community connection in an open park setting. There will be no fireworks at the event, however, we encourage all to join the City of Cle Elum in their Pioneer Day celebration and fireworks show.

Previous Council Action:

N/A

Analysis:

N/A

Financial Impact:

N/A

Budget Adjustment: No

Attachments:

None