

Executive Summary – Neighborhood Café 2018

Ellensburg City Council members recognize the responsibility of public service to all residents. They also are aware that certain voices from under-represented, silent or changing/generational populations are less known. Council's success is premised on the relationship with its constituency – those who live in Ellensburg today and how policy decisions impact current and future residents.

To better listen to and act on the desires of the broader community, council created an initiative called Neighborhood Café based on three primary goals:

Goal 1: Increase participation and involvement in policy making for current and future residents

Goal 2: Strengthen community capacity to care for one another

Goal 3: Create and sustain links between residents and Council

The format for each café included

- A resident host. City council members reached out to various community members to see if they would be interested in hosting a café. Hosts committed to inviting people to 'their' café – some sent out evites or hand delivered invitations provided by the city or posted an invitation to attend on social media. Either the host or the city provides a meeting space (e.g. living room) for the café, and refreshments. Each café was designed to last one hour.
- Two city council members. Individually, each city council member would participate in one or more cafés, with two city council members in attendance at each café.
- Scribe. To allow council members the opportunity to listen and interact with people at the café, the city's Communications Officer served in the role of facilitator, timekeeper and note taker.
- Five questions. In September, two council members met to discuss the Neighborhood Café framework. A key meeting deliverable was the development of five questions to pose to participants at each café to facilitate data analysis. Questions were vetted through the full city council.

During the months of October and November 2018, six residents¹ invited neighbors, family, and friends to their homes for a Neighborhood Café. The number of participants at each café ranged from three to twenty-two. About fifty people in total attended the six cafés. CWU students, young families, business owners, and retirees all participated. The location of five of the six cafés was within about one mile of downtown. Themes emerged from participant responses to the five predetermined questions at each of the

¹ Eight residents in total expressed an interest in hosting a café in 2018; 2 cancelled.

six cafés. These themes are described below, and include specific statements noted at the cafés, as well as possible points for council members to discuss:

- Increase community presence. It was clear at all six Neighborhood Cafés that residents appreciated the opportunity to have personal interaction with city council members. Many suggested ways to further council contact in the community, as well as endorsing the continuance of the Neighborhood Café concept.

POINTS FOR COUNCIL DISCUSSION:

- Continue with Ask The Mayor
- Expand Ask The Mayor to include Ask A City Council Member
- Continue Neighborhood Cafes
- Regularly attend/speak at area meetings (e.g. Rotary)
- Guest lecture at CWU classes
- Attend block parties

- Encourage/promote pedestrian/bicycle safety. The mention of sidewalks and pedestrian safety was raised at all six Neighborhood Cafés. Lighting of sidewalks (e.g. gaps in lit areas from one light post to the next), ADA compliance, and condition of sidewalks (e.g. keeping them clear of snow, free of weeds, and level so as not to be tripping hazards) were some of the comments echoed by café participants.

POINTS FOR COUNCIL DISCUSSION:

- Review, update 2008 Non-Motorized Transportation Plan
 - Key issues raised illumination and year round condition of sidewalks
 - Require/enforce clear sidewalks (e.g. snow)
- Better information about how to use the bike boulevard

- Demonstrate how Ellensburg is a family friendly community. Stated at most, but not all, Neighborhood Cafés was the lack of facilities and support for young families.

Comments:

'There is a gap of things to do and places to go for middle schoolers. SBYC is great, but hours are limited.'

'Childcare is very limited in the area, and families are leaving.'

'We need more for kids to do, especially teenagers. Sports are okay, but other things are needed.'

'I take my kids and my money to Wenatchee and Yakima to do things.'

POINTS FOR COUNCIL DISCUSSION:

- Address the need for a community center
- Continue work on the Town Center
- Encourage establishing pocket parks in new developments
- Work to complete the Circle the City project
- Create, continue intergenerational traditions
- Support innovative ways to encourage siting of childcare facilities
- Explore ways to engage youth, especially non-sport/short duration activities for teens, in meaningful ways

- Improve Ellensburg's 'front door'. The aesthetics of the interchanges and nuisance items (e.g. garbage, dilapidated homes, weeds) were echoed at all Neighborhood Cafés. While the downtown beautification is working, Ellensburg doesn't *show its pride as you enter* from the interchanges. Code enforcement and keeping neighborhoods in good order was a topic of discussion at most cafés, predominately in the context of nuisance items of note in their neighborhoods. Also, several cafés talked about the mix matched signage about town.

Comments:

'University Way is ugly.'

'The west entrance to the city hurts us.'

'Need to think beyond downtown to the interchanges.'

'Let's be more like Leavenworth but not like Leavenworth.' (as it pertains to signage)

POINTS FOR COUNCIL DISCUSSION:

- Continue beautification efforts in downtown
- Think beyond downtown to improving our interchanges, including park development in new subdivisions
- Revisit code enforcement (now a compliant driven process) for how to get all to comply with code pertaining to garbage, weeds, dilapidated properties
- Identify, inform citizens of volunteer opportunities such as trash collection
- Review sign regulations for businesses and wayfinding (more continuity)

- Attract, keep people in Ellensburg. This was a common conversation at cafés - How do we attract businesses who are willing to invest in the community, and provide livable wages? How do we keep CWU students after graduation? How do we grow a sustainable population of skilled laborers? The types of businesses café participants wish to attract to Ellensburg and hire people varied greatly. Some café participants expressed the desire for a mall, others about building out the uniqueness of our downtown, others wanting to support small businesses

and professional services providers, and still others about the need (desire?) for more retail, high end grocery (e.g. Trader Joes) stores.

POINTS FOR COUNCIL DISCUSSION:

- Promote, with continuity, a welcoming community where people feel like they belong
- Partner with others to identify opportunities for CWU students after graduation
- Work together to encourage internships, mentoring for the trades
- Adjust zoning at interchanges to reflect current trends for retailers
- Encourage unique type and mix of downtown businesses

A process for considering what was heard and learned.

As stated by a Neighborhood Café participant: See this as a process not as an event.

Information shared at the Neighborhood Cafés provides food for discussion amongst city council members. These reflects provide a starting point for such a conversation. Neighborhood Cafés are one mechanism to elicit meaningful conversation with residents. As stated above by one of the participants – *See this (Neighborhood Cafés) as a process, not as an event.*

How are we doing thus far?

Looking at the goals for the Neighborhood Cafés, have they been successful at providing a platform for city council members to better listen to and act on the desires of the broader community?

<p>Goal 1: Increase participation and involvement in policy making for current and future residents.</p>	<p>The personal interactions between city council members and residents through the Neighborhood Cafés is a success, as measured by the participant’s comments, their desire to continue the Cafe and the meaningful ways in which they shared their concerns, compliments, and ideas for the future.</p>
<p>Goal 2: Strengthen community capacity to care for one another.</p>	<p>The Neighborhood Cafés allowed people to come together and express their care for their community and for one another.</p>
<p>Goal 3: Create and sustain links between residents and Council.</p>	<p>With six Neighborhood Cafés completed, and four more in the wings for 2019, all seven members of city council reached about fifty residents over the course of two months.</p>

This report is a reflection upon the 2018 Neighborhood Cafés, and intends to be a discussion document for Ellensburg City Council.