



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

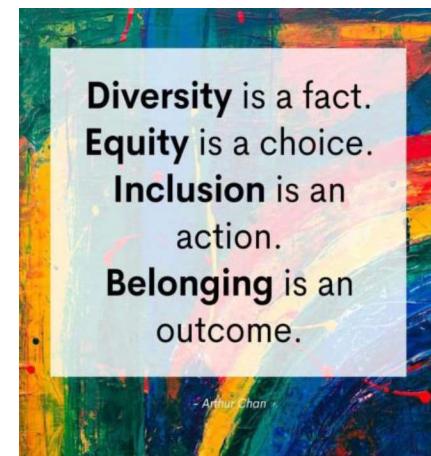
What does this all mean? Supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion related educational opportunities, social gathering opportunities, and supporting access to community resources, can create a sense of belonging within the community for all residents.

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.

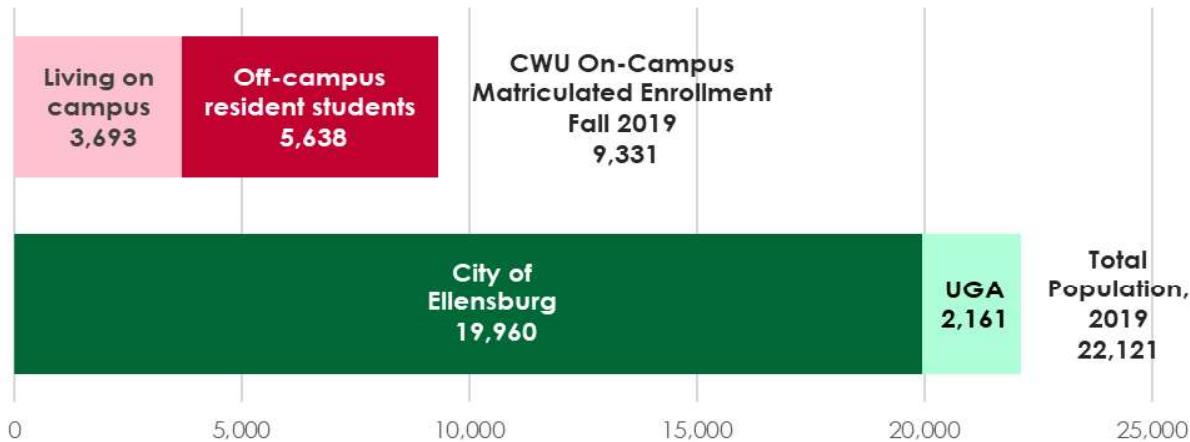
Future

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

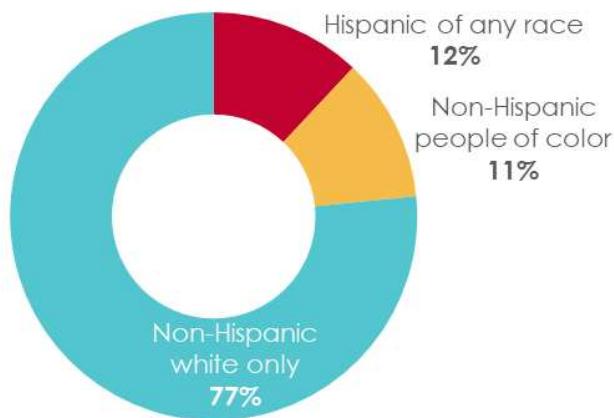


Students living on campus represents the housing occupancy for Fall 2019. Programmed capacity is 3,918 and the full built capacity is 4,249.

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.