

Fact Sheet

What is a Housing Action Plan?

A Housing Action Plan (HAP) is a set of concrete steps for the City of Ellensburg to support and encourage new housing production that meets local housing needs.

The plan will consider the housing needs of current residents, the current workforce, and projected population growth, with a careful eye toward equity of opportunities for housing in different neighborhoods.

Why is housing important?

Shelter is the most basic of human needs. When people can secure stable and affordable housing within a reasonable distance of their social and professional networks, they are able to focus on achieving other life goals, such as education, career advancement, health and wellness, or raising a family. Without stable and affordable housing, residents can struggle to achieve these goals.

Why does the City of Ellensburg need a HAP?

There is a housing shortage in Ellensburg, and the region continues to grow in population. This results in low vacancy rates, a lack of housing choices for residents seeking to move, and increased competition for the limited supply of homes that are available. When competition is high, housing prices and rents will increase.

Over a third of all families and households in Ellensburg are cost-burdened, meaning they pay more than 30% of their household income on housing costs. By increasing the supply of housing in formats that are affordable to more families and individuals, we can support secure and stable housing and increase community resiliency during times of economic uncertainty.

What is the goal of developing a HAP for Ellensburg? How will the Plan help to make Ellensburg a more equitable city?

Through the HAP, the City of Ellensburg aims to ensure that more housing is available and affordable for people of all income levels, that a greater variety of housing types will be available, and that existing housing is well maintained. The HAP will be flexible to accommodate future growth and changing conditions in Ellensburg.

For more information

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What does “affordable housing” mean?

Housing is typically considered affordable if total housing costs do not exceed 30% of a household’s gross income.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) uses an income benchmark—area median income or AMI—for its federal housing programs. The 2021 regional AMI for a family of 4 is \$76,000.

Do “affordable housing” and “subsidized housing” mean the same thing?

Affordable housing and subsidized housing are different, even though they are sometimes used interchangeably. Affordable housing broadly speaks to housing which is affordable to a certain household’s budget. Subsidized housing refers to programs that provide direct payments to individual households or development projects who then provide reduced rent to tenants. Typically, to live in subsidized housing, your income needs to be below a certain threshold (and sometimes you need to meet other requirements). Public housing, rental assistance like Section 8, and developments that use Low-Income Housing Tax Credits are examples of subsidized housing.

How will the HAP be developed?

Developing a HAP involves several phases of work. The process will include assessing housing needs and market conditions using publicly available data sources; reviewing past studies and research on the topic; gathering information through interviews with stakeholders; and engaging the public.

What are the key issues that the City of Ellensburg is considering in the HAP?

Some common causes of housing affordability problems are rising construction costs, new housing construction that does not address local needs, shortages of rental and ownership units, displacement of residents due to increasing housing costs, or a lack of housing close to living-wage jobs. The City of Ellensburg is considering all these factors in the HAP.

When will the plan be developed?

A public draft will be released in August, 2021. This draft will be open for review and comment. The City Council will hold a meeting for potential adoption of the HAP, including any changes from the public comment period, in October, 2021.

Who should participate in developing the HAP?

Ellensburg’s community includes a wide range of residents and households with a diversity of needs and challenges. The City of Ellensburg wants to hear from the entire community to develop the HAP so that the housing strategies will be reflective of all residents and

A photograph of a modern, multi-story house with large windows and a flat roof, set against a light blue background. The house is partially obscured by a semi-transparent teal overlay.

grounded in community members' knowledge of Ellensburg's strengths and challenges.

Broad community engagement in developing the HAP also helps ensure that the plan reflects housing needs that might not show up in statistical data, such as the connection between housing and human services.

How can I participate?

Stay tuned for upcoming opportunities to share your insights and perspectives about housing in Ellensburg to help shape the City's Housing Action Plan through an online survey. This brief survey will ask for input on housing needs and barriers to the development of more housing within the City.